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THE
HISTORY OF PARTY;

FROM THE RISE OF
THE WHIG AND TORY FACTIONS,
IN THE REIGN OF CHARLES II.,
TO
THE PASSING OF THE REFORM BILL.

BY
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BARRISTER AT LAW,
AUTHOR OF "MEMOIRS OF LORD BOLINGBROKE," &c.

VOL. III.
A. D. 1762—1832.

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ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE THIRD VOLUME.

THE first volume of this work exhibited a detail of the rise of the Whig party, and of the efforts by which they at length succeeded in stripping the crown of every prerogative which could oppress the subject.

The second comprised a long period during which the Whigs administered, in the constitution they had built ;—a period less eventful, because less checkered with misfortune.

In this volume the history is concluded. It narrates the succeeding interval of Tory government, and ends with the return of the Whigs to power and the passing of the Reform bill.


This arrangement has unavoidably occasioned some difference in the size of the volumes. A more serious objection will be brought against the present volume. In it, I have overstepped the threshold

ADVERTISEMENT.

of the present generation, and the events which contemporaries judge so all-important, have been passed over as lightly as those of other times. I much regret that the nature of the work so imperatively required that it should be brought down to so recent a period. Contemporary history can seldom be correct, and can never be satisfactory. Each person sees only one phase of the events of his time, and the great majority of readers will think that the events they remember are slighted if they are diminished until they harmonize with the general scale of the historical picture.

The reasons which forbade me to continue the biographical sketches into the present generation are sufficiently obvious.

To an objection already urged, that this work is deficient in minute details and statistical calculations, I must remark that "THE HISTORY OF PARTY" is not intended as a work of reference to supersede the thousand volumes from which it is culled—it is not a collection of all that an historical student can discover, but a compendium of knowledge of which no British elector should be ignorant.



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THE HISTORY OF PARTY.

CHAPTER I.

The Bute administration—Political writings—Biographical anecdotes of John Wilkes—The North Briton—Negotiations for peace—Debate upon the preliminaries—Mr. Pitt's speech—Formation of the opposition—Its members—Topics of opposition—The cider tax—Unpopularity and resignation of Lord Bute—Review of his administration.

THE Earl of Bute became prime minister on the 29th of May, 1762. George Grenville, who had now forsaken his early companion, and the principles to which his friend still adhered, was made secretary of state. Sir Francis Dashwood was chancellor of the exchequer—"a man to whom," says one of the periodicals of the day,* "a sum of five figures was an impenetrable secret." Charles Townshend was secretary at war. The Duke of Bedford, the Earl of

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* Quoted in the History of the Minority.

CHAP. Egremont, who inherited the Toryism of his father,
I. and Mr. Charles Yorke, retained their places.

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The impetus which it had received from the hand of Pitt continued for some time to propel the state machine. Tidings of successes continued to arrive, the loss of the Havannah checked the insolence of Spain, and the processions of cart-loads of bullion plundered from the captured galleons delighted the English people. But no success, however brilliant, could give popularity to the premier, or reconcile the nation to the rule of a favourite. The king's friends—such was the title under which the Tory party had now seized the government—were still execrated, and all the honour of success was ascribed to Pitt. The Tory ministers were even looked upon with suspicion, as men who scarcely participated in the joy of the nation, and who were eager to follow in the steps of the last prime minister of their party, and conclude a glorious war by a dishonourable peace. It was said that the Earl of Bute felt his own insufficiency to conduct the great schemes which had been devised by his predecessor, and would reject no terms that might be offered. He had already refused to renew the annual treaty by which Great Britain assisted the King of Prussia with a subsidy and engaged to make no peace without his concurrence; and although this step was readily defensible on the ground that Russia, Frederic's gigantic enemy, had then become his ally,

and Sweden was about to withdraw from the confederacy against him; still it was loudly censured at home as a breach of national honour, and remarked upon as a proof that the favourite entertained all the ancient partiality of a Scotchman towards France.

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Immediately after the earl was formally invested with the office of premier parliament was prorogued, and he was thus left to pursue his policy, whether for peace or war, without direct interruption. It was now, however, that the effects of the long administration of the Whigs became manifest in the conduct of the nation. The Whig party was scattered and irresolute, Pitt and his city friends looked with distrust upon Newcastle and his aristocratic followers, and Newcastle envied and dreaded his too powerful ally. No party-plan of opposition could be formed; but while the chiefs were deliberating the people were in action. Upon the resignation of Pitt such a storm had arisen from all parts of the kingdom, that the first act of the new minister was an attempt to turn the current of public opinion. On the 29th of May, the day he entered upon his office, was published the first number of a periodical called *The Briton*,* which had as its object the support of the new minister. The highly-wrought panegyric upon the Earl of Bute which this number contains, and the marked abuse of Pitt with which it concludes, called forth several opponents. The Mo-

* Written by Dr. Smollett.

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nitor and the *Observer* had been already in existence and opposition, but on the ensuing Saturday a rival, destined to obtain more enduring notoriety, made its appearance. This was the first number of the *North Briton* which came forth to defend William Pitt from the calumnies of the ministerial writer, and to ridicule the perfections of his master. The principal contributor to this periodical, John Wilkes, is a character which circumstances rendered too important to be introduced without especial notice.

John Wilkes was the second son of a wealthy distiller living in St. John's-square, Clerkenwell, but descended of a family of that name long settled in Buckinghamshire. John was born in October, 1730. His father, supposing he had discovered in his son a superior ability, bestowed considerable care upon his education. At an early age he was placed under the tuition of Mr. Leeson, a dissenting clergyman, from whom he obtained a considerable knowledge of the classics. While yet young he went, accompanied by his tutor, to the University of Leyden, where he prosecuted his studies with diligence and success; and whence he returned, after the completion of the usual academical course, with the reputation of being a young man of very extensive acquirements and considerable talent. To an accurate and extensive knowledge of the ancient and modern languages he added a graceful and gentlemanly deportment, great

conversational powers, ready wit, and an undaunted assurance. His education was considered completed by the usual tour of the continent, during which he contracted friendships with many men eminent for their genius and learning, and among others with Dr. Andrew Baxter,* the most profound theologian and metaphysician of his time, with whom he carried on a frequent correspondence, and who did not think his young friend unworthy of honourable mention in one of his works. In 1749 Wilkes returned to London, and in October of the same year married Miss Mead. This lady was possessed of a large fortune, she was the only daughter of the most intimate friend of his mother, and she had refused the addresses of Lord Bellenden in his favour. These were incentives which dutiful obedience, cupidity, or gratified vanity would alike approve. On the other hand, Miss Mead was upwards of thirty-two, Wilkes was not yet twenty-two, and their dispositions and habits were as little in accordance as their ages.† It was this ill-assorted

* Baxter's Appendix to the "Inquiry into the Nature of the Human Soul" is dedicated to John Wilkes, and is said by the author to have been suggested by a conversation he held with Wilkes in the Capuchins' garden at Spa. The correspondence between Wilkes and Baxter was only interrupted

by death: Mr. Baxter continuing his letters even after he was unable to write with his own hand.—*Biog. Dict.*, art. *Barter*.

† In one of Wilkes's letters to Mrs. Stafford, in 1778, speaking of this marriage, he says, "Now, one word on my own situation. In my nonage, to please an indulgent

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marriage which rendered Wilkes so prominent a character in the political transactions of his time.

Hitherto Wilkes had been a prudent and a studious youth, one from whom, in the words of Andrew Baxter, "all good men conceived great hopes." But he quickly grew disgusted with the person and the temper of his wife, and plunged into dissipation to forget the tie which bound him to her. He now became intimate with the highest and most licentious libertines of the day, and they, captivated by his wit and conversation, assiduously courted his society. It is a singular fact that among the most constant of his companions at this period we find those who were a few years later his most bitter persecutors. Sir Francis Dashwood, Lord Saville, and Wilkes, were inseparable at the Dilettanti and the Beef-steak Club, and they mingled together in every scene of debauchery. Another of his companions was Thomas Potter, son of the archbishop of that name, who seems to

father, I married a woman half as old again as myself, of a large fortune—my own being also that of a gentleman. It was a sacrifice to Plutus, not to Venus. I never lived with her in the strict sense of the word; nor have I seen her for nearly twenty years. I stumbled at the very threshold of the temple of Hymen.

'The god of love was not a bidden guest,

'Nor present at his own mysterious feast.'

"Are such ties at such a time of life binding?—and are schoolboys to be dragged to the altar?"—*Almon's Life and Correspondence of John Wilkes*, vol. i., p. 28.

have surpassed all others in the extravagance of his wit and the pungency of his profanity. The vivacity of this clever debauchee endeared him to Wilkes, and his counsel hastened his ruin. Among other schemes of dissipation invented by this ribald crew, was the foundation of the Mock Monks' Club. For this purpose thirteen of them engaged Medmenham Abbey, near Marlow, in Buckinghamshire, and fitted it up as a temple of luxurious debauchery. The decorations of this place might have suggested to a second Mahomet a description of another sensual heaven: the most elaborate art was employed to embody the most impure ideas, and every room and every grove was replete with libidinous inscriptions, veiled from the vulgar by the medium of a classical idiom. Here Sir Francis Dashwood presided, as abbot, and the society, from the name of their head, assumed the title of The Order of Saint Francis. Every species of vice which fame had attributed to the ancient monks was here practised; their religious observances were mimicked; and when these imitations grew tame from repetition, the abbot assumed the name of the founder of Christianity, and his twelve *apostles* bowed around him.*

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* The unutterable charges insinuated by Churchill in his "Candidate," against this society, and favoured by Wilkes in his note upon the passage, are probably the results of after quarrels. There is a good account of this club in Chrysal.

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Amid such scenes it is no wonder that honour and probity quickly died, that virtue soon appeared to Wilkes but a stale jest, and patriotism the mask of clever knaves. When such men were admitted to his wife's society, and Potter's obscene jests fell upon her ear, it is no wonder that Mrs. Wilkes fled from her husband's house, and sought the protection of her mother.

The ruinous expenditure which this mode of life entailed was the subject of frequent remonstrance from Mrs. Wilkes, who appears to have been as parsimonious as her youthful husband was licentious. He was now ambitious of a seat in parliament: he spent 3000*l.* in an imprudent and unsuccessful attempt upon Berwick; and upon his return from his canvass, smarting under his defeat, he was assailed with reproaches at home. A quarrel and a separation ensued: by the deed Wilkes retained a portion of the property, and granted an annuity of 200*l.*

In 1757, Wilkes, at an expense of 7000*l.*, became member for Aylesbury, where some of his property lay, and he himself occasionally resided. His election for this borough was not the reward of any political exertions; it was effected by a chain of delicate manœuvres by which his friend Potter, his predecessor at Aylesbury, succeeded Mr. Pitt in the representation of Oakhampton, thus making a vacancy for

Wilkes. Mr. Pitt was returned for Bath, and Wilkes paid the whole expense of the arrangement.

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This heavy expenditure exhausted his finances, and with the true heartlessness of a practised libertine, he proposed to escape from his embarrassments by forcing from his wife her separate property. He pursued his design without shame or decency; brought Mrs. Wilkes into court by a writ of *habeas corpus*, and only desisted from his attempt when Lord Mansfield declared that any further annoyance would subject him to a commitment.

Now it was that Wilkes began to look to the emoluments of office as a means to retrieve his fortune. He at first proceeded with moderation; he gained the friendship of Lord Temple, who was his neighbour in Buckinghamshire,* and so far retained that of Sir Francis Dashwood that, when Sir Francis resigned

* What little interest Wilkes possessed he freely employed in behalf of his literary contemporaries. Two of his most vehement abusers were Dr. Smollett and Dr. Johnson. About this time he conferred a signal obligation upon the latter, by obtaining the release of his black servant who had been seized by a press-gang. Dr. Smollett was the medium through which Johnson made his application. Wilkes had dared

to throw a stone at Johnson, an impertinence which the doctor never forgave. In his English Grammar prefixed to his Dictionary, the lexicographer had written, "H, seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable." Wilkes published some remarks upon this dictum; commencing, "The author of this observation must be a man of quick apprehension, and of a most comprehensive genius."

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his commission as colonel of the Buckinghamshire militia, he recommended Mr. Wilkes as his successor. In 1760, Sir James Porter, the British minister at Constantinople, desired to be recalled, and Wilkes fixed his desires upon the office, as one which would at once gratify his love of distinction and remove him from his creditors. His application was made through Mr. Legge to the Duke of Newcastle ; but Mr. Legge was at this time an unfortunate patron. The Earl of Bute interfered, and Wilkes was disappointed. Such was the origin of the hatred which Wilkes always manifested towards the king's favourite minister. In 1761, during Mr. Pitt's negotiation with France, when it was known that Canada was to be retained by England, the government of that province caught Mr. Wilkes's attention. He mentioned it to Lord Temple, and had the negotiation succeeded, he would have had the appointment. The failure of Mr. Pitt's negotiation, and the ejection of the Whig party from office, destroyed all his hopes. His embarrassments had increased beyond endurance ; his disappointment infused into him a hatred of the party which had succeeded to power, and the desperate state of his fortunes made him reckless as to the means he adopted to overthrow them.

Under these circumstances, he, in conjunction with the poet Churchill, started the *North Briton*. The early numbers of this periodical attracted at-

tention because they appealed to the passions and the prejudices of the multitude. The abuse of Scotland and of Scotchmen was the North Briton's constant theme. At first, in accordance with the title assumed, the abuse was conveyed in irony ; but as the attack grew hotter this veil was thrown away, and the North Briton continued to inveigh against the cloud of adventurers, which, at the beck of the minister, crossed the Tweed and spread like locusts over the land, and to vent the most bitter personalities against the favourite and his colleagues.

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Upon a perusal of these letters, without reference to the extraordinary excitement they occasioned, we should judge them to be characterized by a very moderate ability. In boldness of invention they had, at their time, no rival, but in composition they fall very far short of the Examiner or the Craftsman : they certainly do not sustain the reputation which, as a scholar and a philosopher, Wilkes had acquired in his younger and his better days.

Notwithstanding the abuse and opposition which he knew it would call forth, the minister determined upon putting an end to the war, and his papers were instructed to prepare the public mind for this course of policy. This was rather boldly than successfully executed. The Briton declared that the war had been carried on in an injudicious manner, and that our extraordinary successes were to be reckoned

CHAP. among its evil consequences.* The hint was im-
 I. mediately taken, the land rung with laughter at the
 A.D. 1762. novel discovery, and the popular papers which echoed
 the voice of the multitude, immediately prophesied
 a disgraceful Tory treaty. Soon after a notice to the
 lord mayor gave information that the negotiation
 had commenced.

Upon the meeting of parliament (Nov. 25), the king could inform the houses that preliminaries had been signed; and on the 29th, they were laid upon the table of the house of commons. A day was immediately appointed for taking them into consideration, and the public expectation was greatly excited. In the lords it was expected that the opposition would be very strong.† Lord Wycombe moved the address, and Lord Hardwicke opposed it in a prepared and lengthy speech; several other peers followed, and many severe and personal reflections were thrown out against the Earl of Bute. He defended himself with an energy he had not been supposed to possess, and concluded by a wish, that his only epitaph might be that he was the author of this peace. At the conclusion of the debate the house was clearly in his favour, and the address was carried without protest, and apparently without division.‡ Even in the commons the struggle was not so severe as had been

* Briton, No. 6.

† Chesterfield to his Son.

‡ Lords' Journals.

anticipated. The minister had prudently provided for this contingency; he had emissaries among all parties, and so well did he strengthen their exertions that it is said he in one day issued 25,000*l.* to their order.*

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Many of the old retainers of successive administrations were so disgusted with their exclusion from office, that they were disposed to neglect no opportunity of returning. Upon the day of the debate many of these slunk away, some feigned sickness, others ran out of town, and many more were absent without troubling themselves to assign any excuse.† When Mr. Fox opened the debate the state of the house seemed scarcely to promise a division. He set forth and justified the preliminaries in a speech of considerable length, and appeared to have thoroughly satisfied his auditory; when Pitt, whom the occasion had drawn from a sick-bed, raised himself upon his crutches to reply.

Although at that instant suffering under the most excruciating torture, he had, he said, determined at the hazard of his life, to attend that day to raise his voice and hand against the preliminary articles of a treaty that obscured all the glories of the war, surrendered the dearest interests of the nation, and sacrificed the public faith by an abandonment of our

* History of the Minority, p. 84.

† Ibid.

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allies. He, he said, had indeed consented to conclude a peace, and his terms had not satisfied all persons, for it was found impossible to reconcile every interest ; but he had not, for the mere attainment of peace, made a sacrifice of any conquest ; he had neither broken the national faith nor betrayed the allies of the crown. He called for a discussion of the merits of the peace he had offered comparatively with the present preliminaries, and challenged the most able casuist among the minister's friends, who in gallant appearance were all mustered and marshalled for duty, to refute him. His motive was to stop that torrent of misrepresentation which was poisoning the virtue of the country.

Thus far he had proceeded, supported by two of his friends, but his bodily weakness here overpowered him. He sank, and the house, moved by his fortitude and his sufferings, granted him the unprecedented indulgence of delivering the remainder of his speech sitting.

The indignant statesman continued for nearly four hours to pour forth his objections to the terms which had been accepted. He contrasted the surrender of the fisheries which had been made by the Earl of Bute, with the conditional surrender which the French had consented to receive from him ; nor would it have been necessary, he said, for him to have conceded even thus much, had he not been

overruled, not by a foreign but by another *enemy*. Of the retention of North America he approved, but it was not the present negotiators who had obtained it. It had been the *uti possidetis* of his own negotiation ; it was a concession which he had gained. Havannah, he said, was also his own, he had designed the conquest, and it would have been made some months earlier had he been permitted to execute his own plans. Why was this key to all the Spanish treasures in America exchanged for Florida ? The terms were inadequate : they were inadequate in every point where the principle of reciprocity was affected to be introduced.

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The conquered islands were to be restored. The restoration of Guadaloupe, it was said he had himself proposed. But he had been overruled in that point also ; he could not help it ; he had been overruled many times—on many occasions ; he had acquiesced—he had submitted. But, at length, he saw that all his measures, all his sentiments were inimical to the new system ; to those persons to whom his majesty had given his confidence. But, to this island these persons had added Martinique and St. Lucia. They seemed to have lost sight of the great fundamental principle that France is chiefly, if not solely to be dreaded by us in the light of a maritime and commercial power. By restoring to her all the valuable

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I. foundland fishery, they have given her the means
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once more formidable to us at sea. The fishery
trains up an innumerable multitude of young seamen ;
the West India trade employs them when they are
trained.

As to the equivalents for these concessions, he argued that the trade of the conquests in North America was extremely low ; the speculations of their future precarious, and the prospect, at the best, remote ; but the exhaustion occasioned by the war called for supplies, certain, speedy, and considerable : the retention of the French islands, or at least one of them, would alone answer this triple purpose.

In Africa, he said, Gorée had been surrendered without the least apparent necessity, after he had obtained that it should remain with the British crown as an essential security to Senegal.

In the East Indies, conquests were to be mutually restored. What, he asked, had France to restore ? All the conquests she had made had been retaken. All her own factories and settlements were in our hands. We had conquered every thing, we retained nothing.

Minorca was indeed restored ; the East Indies,

the West Indies, and Africa were its price—a price fifty times its worth. This was the only conquest France had to restore.

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Pitt now passed on to a defence of his own policy, vindicated the propriety of the German war, and declared with all his own startling emphasis, that America had been conquered in Germany; he refuted in detail, many of the objections which had been urged against him, and returned again to the treaty, inveighing against the desertion of the King of Prussia as insidious, tricking, base, and treacherous. He would have spoken of Spain, but his voice was now scarcely audible, and he concluded by declaring, that upon the whole, the preliminaries met with his most hearty disapprobation. He saw in them, he said, the seeds of a future war. The peace was insecure because it restored the enemy to her former greatness: its terms were inadequate, because the places gained were no equivalent for the places surrendered.*

Such were Mr. Pitt's objections to the terms upon which his war had been concluded. His speech upon this occasion was considered a failure, and such it no doubt was. "It is impossible," says Lord Chesterfield, upon this occasion, "for a human creature to speak well for three hours and a half;" and Lord

* Parl. Hist., vol. xv., col. 1270.

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Barrington, who was present, remarks that he never before made so long or so bad a speech.* The great force of Pitt's oratory lay not in the words he uttered, but in the manner in which he uttered them: there is eloquence in his reported speeches, but not eloquence in any degree equal to the effect they produced. We cannot read in them the scathing power which made the boldest member tremble when he arose, nor see in them the cause of the paralysis which bound the most voluble speaker when his eye was upon them.† Upon this occasion

* Lord Barrington to Andrew Mitchell. Ellis's Letters, second series, vol. iv., p. 455.

† On one occasion, Pitt, immediately after he had finished a speech in the house of commons, walked out of it, and, as usual, with a very slow step. A silence ensued until the door was

opened to let him into the lobby.

A member then started up, saying,

"Mr. Speaker,—I rise to reply to the honourable member." Pitt

turned round and fixed his eye on

the orator, who instantly sat down

dumb: he then returned to his

seat, repeating as he hobbled

along, the verses of Virgil:

"Ast Danaum progenes, Agamemnoniæque phalanges

Ut videre virum, fulgentiaque arma per umbras,

Ingenti trepidare metu,—pars vertere retro,

Seu quondam petiere rates—pars tollere vocem

Exiguam—inceptus clamor frustratur hiantes."

Then placing himself in his seat, he exclaimed, "Now let me hear what the honourable member has to say to me." Mr. Butler, who relates this anecdote (in his "Reminiscences") asked the

gentleman from whom he heard it,

if the house did not laugh at the

ridiculous figure of the poor mem-

ber. "No, sir," he was answered,

"we were all too much awed to

laugh."

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his sitting posture precluded all vehemence of gesticulation, and his feebleness extended to his voice, and, doubtless, subtracted largely from his confidence of power. But this speech, however listlessly heard, is read with interest. It was not an essay at opposition, for no opposition was yet formed. During the course of his harangue, the orator distinctly denied that he was then connected with any who were thought to meditate a systematic opposition, and he intimated that he should appear but seldom in the house.* We read herein, therefore, Pitt's deliberate opinion of the terms upon which the war he had carried on was concluded. We find that terms which had been conceded to him, while Spain was still powerful and ready to declare herself, had been refused to his successor when that power was crippled, and additional conquests justified additional demands.

Thus early was the determination of George the Third to support an unpopular party, under the title of the king's friends, followed by national loss. They were compelled to make peace because they could not raise funds to continue the war; for the merchants who had so readily opened their purses to Pitt, closed them against a minister whom they doubted whether they could trust. This peace was

* Ellis's Letters, second series, vol. iv., p. 445.

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doubtless advantageous to England, and humiliating to France : after such uniform triumph it could not have been otherwise. But how different had been its conditions had Pitt been allowed to conclude the work he had so well carried on. How great the contrast between a negotiator who dictates conditions of peace with the same pen with which he had drawn schemes of gigantic conquests now achieved, who knew his own power and his enemy's weakness ; and a negotiator who trembled at the shadow of his predecessor's greatness, doubted whether England or France was more his enemy, and found his greatest embarrassments in the successes of his country.

Fox, in reply to Pitt, repeated the advantages that had been gained, extolled their value, and argued that the objects for which the war had been originally undertaken were fully secured. Upon the division the victory was as complete as he himself could wish : the preliminaries were approved by two hundred and twenty-seven against sixty-three. In the two divisions which took place upon this question, ninety-seven* members only avowed their

* Parl. Hist , vol. xv. col. 1272. speaking, left the house. It is The greatness of this majority said that the Duke of Newcastle was doubtless occasioned in some had desired his party in the house degree by the disunited state of not to divide, but Mr. Dempster, the Whig party. Pitt, after a young Scotch member, who had

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disapprobation. Thus easily was a house of commons, which had during the former session been nearly unanimous in their support of Mr. Pitt, persuaded to show themselves nearly equally unanimous in rejecting his counsel when he was no longer a minister.

This vote of the house of commons was but little in accordance with the opinion of the nation, and the outcry was so great, that the minister thought it necessary to devise some expedient to prevent its reaching the royal closet. Ministerial envoys were now despatched over the country, and every art was used to procure addresses approving the peace. The cause must be bad indeed which cannot find some individuals in each county to support it; but the exposure of some of the intrigues by which these addresses were obtained, and the protests they drew forth, went far toward destroying their utility.

The multitudes who exclaimed against the late treaty all looked up to Pitt as their chief, and the Duke of Newcastle and his party of aristocratic Whigs, finding they were powerless without the support of the people, overcame their jealousy and made overtures for a coalition with the late minister.

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taken it into his head to be in the minority upon this occasion, took it likewise into his head to bring the house to a division, which exposed the nakedness of his party. — *Ellis's Letters*, second series, vol. iv., p. 453.

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Pitt readily consented: early in March the opposition was formed. The leaders met at a dinner at the house of the Duke of Newcastle. There were present, the Dukes of Devonshire, Bolton, and Portland; the Marquis of Rockingham; Earls Temple, Cornwallis, Albemarle, Ashburnham, Hardwicke, and Besborough; Lords Spencer, Sondes, Grantham, and Villiers; Sir George Saville, Mr. J. Grenville, and Mr. Pitt. These were now the conspicuous members of the Whig party.

The newly-formed opposition were not without subjects of complaint. Among the financial arrangements of the ensuing year, the minister had proposed a loan of 3,500,000*l.*, which he raised by private subscription upon terms so exorbitant, that they drew down the strong disapprobation of Mr. Legge in the house of commons. The urgent applications for portions of this subscription, yet extant among the MS. letters to Lord Bute in the British Museum, show that the whole affair was a mere contrivance to reward the ministerial phalanx. In a few days the truth became evident to all. The stock immediately rose ten per cent. above the subscribing price, discovering that the minister had thus distributed 350,000*l.* among his friends. This was a flight which left the genius of Walpole far behind.

The Earl of Bute was now about to imitate Wal-

pole in another part of his administration in which that minister had been less successful. Not daunted by the storm, which he might have remembered as occasioned by the last proposition of the kind, he now proposed an excise upon cider. This measure produced the same degree of virulent opposition which had been arrayed against that of 1733; Pitt put forth all his strength against it in the commons, and it was not without six divisions that it was forced through the house. Petitions against it to both houses of parliament, and even to the throne, poured in from every county affected by the measure, mobs were again assembled in all parts of the country, and cockades were worn, inscribed "Liberty, Whigs, and no Excise." To such a demonstration Walpole succumbed, but the Earl of Bute professed all his party's contempt for popular clamour. After a struggle in the lords—a very unusual occurrence upon a bill of supply, the measure became law.*

The odium which this perseverance occasioned, drove the minister from the helm. So thoroughly was he now detested, that it was unsafe for him to appear in the public streets. Twice had he been attacked by the populace: on one occasion his carriage had been demolished, although surrounded by a guard of prize-fighters; on another, his life was saved by the interference of the civil power.† Ter-

* Annual Register. Parl. Hist.

† History of the Minority.

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rified by the expressions of national abhorrence which he every where encountered, and probably actuated also by the motive which he himself assigned, an unwillingness to render his master unpopular, the Earl of Bute resigned office, and declared that he would never again interfere in political questions.

This short administration, although the cabinet consisted of Tories, was not founded upon Tory *principles*; neither the king nor the minister advocated, or perhaps understood the peculiar principles of either party. The only principle of this government was favouritism: the minister was the favourite of the king, the subordinate officials were favourites of the minister: these were all Tories, because the principles, the pride, and the recent supremacy of the Whigs forbade them to hold office under such humiliating terms. The kings of a constitutional monarchy are usually obliged to be content with being absolute in their own court; George III. wished to go further, and to make his courtiers his ministers. The experiment failed; the courtier was compelled to retire from the public stage, and to be satisfied with prompting others, himself unseen.

CHAPTER II.

The Grenville administration—The North Briton, No. 45—Arrest of Wilkes — General warrants — Death of Lord Egremont— Attempt of the king and the Tories to detach Mr. Pitt from the Whigs—Its failure—Death of Earl Grenville — Meeting of parliament—Proceedings against Wilkes—Review of the conduct of ministers in the proceedings against Wilkes.

THE resignation of Lord Bute made little alteration in the measures of government. Like Walpole he had taken care to leave his own friends in office to protect him from prosecution or censure. George Grenville was his successor. This gentleman, whose brothers, Earl Temple and James Grenville, were so strenuous and conspicuous as members of the opposition, had now altogether deserted the party with which he had set out in life, and had become identified with the Tories. Lords Egremont and Halifax continued secretaries of state : Fox retained his lucrative but subordinate station as paymaster of the

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Contemporary writers† attributed the overthrow of Lord Bute to the talent and influence of the North Briton, which had certainly directed and expressed the popular indignation when the Whigs in parliament were silent. When the minister's resignation was made known, the publication of this paper ceased ; but no sooner were the new appointments gazetted, than it was resumed. Forty-four numbers had already been published. On the 23d of April, No. 45 appeared, ushered by an adver-

* A note to one of the numbers of the North Briton contains a most odious character of this nobleman, whom we have lately seen as the writer's most intimate friend ; but I cannot rely upon any of Mr. Wilkes's writings for the characters of his contemporaries. If we were to believe the title of what is alleged in some of this writer's notes to the poems

of Churchill, against Lord le Despencer and others, we must believe that most of the public men of this time were, in private life, monsters. The profligacy of the Earl of Sandwich and Lord le Despencer is proved by a concurrence of contemporary testimony.

† See the History of the Minority and other pamphlets of the day.

tisement, in which the writer asserted that the Scottish minister had not retired, but that he still governed by three wretched tools of his power ; he declared that he was ready to combat this triple-headed Cerberean administration, and pledged himself the firm and intrepid assertor of the rights of his fellow subjects, and of the liberties of Whigs and Englishmen.

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This sounding introduction was the prelude to a strain of very ordinary abuse.* Wilkes considered the king's speech to parliament as the speech of the minister and criticised it as such ; an assumption he had a perfect right to make. He spoke of the sovereign as imposed upon by his minister, and lamented that a prince of so many great and amiable

* It is said that No. 45 of the North Briton, was suggested by a conversation held between Earl Temple, Pitt, and Wilkes. On Mr. Grenville receiving his appointment as first lord of the treasury, it was of course necessary that he should be re-elected ; and as he sat for his brother's borough of Buckingham, he was obliged, although then at variance with him, to ask his permission to be rechosen. In the letter containing the request was enclosed, as a compliment, a copy of the king's

speech which was to be spoken on the morrow. Mr. Pitt was at Lord Temple's house, in Pall Mall, when the letter arrived, and, owing to his intercession, the consent was given. Wilkes, who was just returned from Paris, called in at the same moment, and a conversation ensued upon the speech. From his recollection of this conversation, and some additions of his own, Wilkes wrote this celebrated paper.—*Almon's Life and Correspondence of Wilkes*, vol i., p. 95.

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qualities, could be brought to give the sanction of his sacred name to the most odious measures, and the most unjustifiable public declarations, from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour, and unsullied virtue.

However libellous this sentence might be as regarded the Earl of Bute, it was no libel upon the sovereign. The house of commons had in effect expressed the same sentiment long before, when they made it one of the articles of the impeachment against Robert Earl of Oxford, that he had corrupted the sacred fountain of truth, and put falsehoods in the mouth of her majesty in several speeches made to parliament. To hold that the sovereign is answerable in any manner for his public speeches, or can be libelled by a denial of the accuracy of their statements, is clearly an anticonstitutional and Tory heresy.

This was one of the passages selected as libellous : another was the following piece of commonplace declamation. “The King of England is only the first magistrate of this country, but is invested by the law with the whole executive power. He is, however, responsible to his people for the due execution of the royal functions, in the choice of ministers, &c., equal with the meanest of his subjects in his particular duty.” The correctness of this position evidently depends upon the sense in which

the word responsible is used, and we are not to expect in the hurried productions of the periodical writer, aiming as he does at bold and startling positions which shall excite for a moment and perish as that excitement droops, the guarded restrictions and carefully poised definitions of finished composition. The whole of this celebrated paper may be judged from these extracts : to those who are in the habit of seeing the diurnal philippics of the present time, which appear, are read, and are forgotten, this number of the North Briton will not be thought to exhibit any extraordinary violence ; nor, judging it from the same comparison, will it be remarked for its ability. It was not the power of the writer, it was the error of a weak ministry which made Wilkes and forty-five the gathering cry of the populace, and rendered the insulter of the sovereign the most popular man in the kingdom.

At the council which was held to decide how this libel should be treated, Lord Mansfield advised that it should be let alone, and exposed, in a forcible manner, the danger of giving the writer importance by a public prosecution. The ministers, however, thought differently ; they each had private wrongs to revenge ; their master insisted upon vengeance, and an opportunity so favourable as an attack upon the king was not likely to recur.

On the 30th of April Wilkes was arrested by

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three messengers, under a general warrant from the secretary of state, directing the officers to apprehend and seize, together with their papers, the authors, printers, and publishers, of a seditious and treasonable paper, entitled the North Briton, Number XLV. These general warrants were clearly illegal, but they had been so long in use, and so uniformly obeyed, that this proceeding of the ministry was rather to be censured as weak than condemned as tyrannical. Having resolved to embark in a prosecution in which they were sure to find the sympathies of the populace against them, they should have been careful that no suspicion of irregularity should appear upon their proceedings. Wilkes saw his advantage; he filled the nation with complaints of the violence he had suffered, and immediately applied for his *habeas corpus*. This writ was evaded by transferring the prisoner from the custody of the messengers; but a second brought him from the tower to the court of common pleas on the 3d of May. The case was now argued both by himself, in a speech which was intended to keep up the excitement without, and by Sergeant Glynn, who addressed himself to the bench. The court employed three days in consideration; and then, without giving judgment upon the validity of the warrant, ordered his discharge, on the ground that he was protected by his privilege of parliament. This decision was received with peals of applause, and Wilkes returned

home attended by a prodigious multitude of people, who followed him with continual acclamation. At night frequent illuminations and bonfires celebrated the triumph of the popular idol.

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While Wilkes was only known to the public as the writer of the North Briton, the Whigs took little notice of a man whose chief aim appeared to be to attract that attention by his violence which he could not command by his talent. Now, however, the folly of the ministry rendered him of importance. In him they had wounded the constitution, and the principles no less than the inclination of the Whigs urged them to afford him protection. Lord Temple immediately undertook his defence, and attempted to render his conduct consistent with the dignity of the part he now had to perform as the vindicator of public liberty. But Wilkes had none of the disinterested patriotism of Hampden or Russell ; public confusion was the object he sought, and that he only desired, as it would contribute to his private gain : he continued to adopt every contrivance to fix public attention upon himself ; wrote to the secretaries of state accusing them of having broken into his house and robbed him of his property, and brought actions against all who had been employed in his illegal arrest. Never forgetting the great end of all his patriotism, he set up a printing press in his own house, and reprinted his North Briton ; he also put forth

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Meanwhile the cabinet was thrown into some confusion by the sudden death of the Earl of Egremont, which occurred on the 21st of August.* This nobleman, although not possessed of the abilities of his father, was of considerable importance in an administration made up of men who were all, except Fox, insignificant in their public characters. The government was now become so weak that it was thought absolutely necessary to look out for some addition to its strength. Lord Bute saw the tottering state of

* Ellis's Letters, second series, vol. iv.

the ministry; he knew that his own unpopularity was unabated, and feared that those whom he had placed in office would be unable to protect him. He sought a more powerful protector—to whom could he turn but to Pitt? A negotiation was immediately commenced, with the utmost secrecy, under the mediation of Lord Saville; and, so rarely is perfect uprightness personated in a statesman, even Pitt, the fairest of our public characters, did not at once refuse to coalesce with the negotiator of the peace of Paris. The arrangement, if it was not originated, was accelerated, by the death of the Earl of Egremont. The Earl of Bute introduced Mr. Pitt to the king at Buckingham House, and a long conference ensued. The king listened attentively, and apparently with conviction; and Pitt, while he was firm in his demands for the restoration of the Whigs, was courtly in his bearing, and unassuming in his demeanour. He found, however, that the secret influence which had already proved so powerful was still to prevail; for when he made an offer to unite with Lord Bute, the king replied, “How! Mr. Pitt, do you mean to laugh at me? You must know, as well as me, that that nobleman is determined never more to take any share in the administration.” Pitt knew that the favourite’s power would remain; he saw only that he was determined to refuse all responsibility.

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The king also expressed a wish to see a reconciliation take place between George Grenville and his brother, Earl Temple, to which Pitt made no reply, but probably drew his inference, that the king's only object was to gain a section of the Whig party to reinforce his present inefficient body-guard of Tories.

From Buckingham House Mr. Pitt proceeded to Claremont, and acquainted the Duke of Newcastle with what had passed, fully persuaded from the king's manner and behaviour that he was in earnest, and all points of difference would be overcome. The two Whig leaders consulted with their friends, and several influential members of their party were sent for to town. The first audience had taken place on the 27th of August, the next was appointed for the 29th. The Whig chief was received as graciously as before, and the king began the conversation. He talked strongly of his honour being concerned in the protection of his present ministers, and mentioned Lord Halifax for the treasury. At this proposal Pitt was naturally startled, and replied that he should never have thought of him for the treasury; but recommended that he should receive the paymaster's place. "But, Mr. Pitt," replied the king, "I had designed that for poor George Grenville. He is your near relation, and you once loved him." To this the only answer made was a low bow. "Why," continued the king, "should not Lord Temple have the treasury? You

could go on then very well." The object was now developed; Pitt and Earl Temple were the only Whigs the king cared to gain. Pitt replied, "Sire, the person whom you shall think fit to honour with the chief conduct of your affairs cannot possibly go on without a treasury connected with him. But that alone will do nothing. It cannot be carried on without the great families who have supported the revolution government, and other great persons of whose abilities and integrity the public has had experience, and who have weight and credit with the nation. I should only deceive your majesty if I should leave you in an opinion that I could go on, and your majesty make a solid administration, on any other foot."

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Some conversation ensued: Mr. Pitt named a great number of his supporters, but refused to draw out, upon the moment, a scheme of a new cabinet. All who voted for the peace, with the exception of the Duke of Marlborough and Lord Halifax, he objected to, and declared that he would have nothing to do with the Duke of Bedford or any Tory whatever. He had now discovered that a change had taken place in the king's intentions since the last interview, and that it was doubly necessary to be firm in his demands, and guarded in his concessions. At last, when it became plain that the only terms upon which Pitt would accept office were, the dismissal of his opponents and the appointment of his friends, the

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king replied, "Well, Mr. Pitt, I see this won't do ; my honour is concerned and I must support it ;" and again, more passionately, he declared, "Were I to submit to such dictation, I had nothing more to do than to take the crown from my head, place it upon yours, and then submit my neck to the block."*

Upon the failure of this negotiation the Duke of Bedford was applied to for assistance: he accepted the office of president of the council, and his powerful influence brought a seasonable reinforcement to the wavering ranks of the government. Lord Sandwich succeeded Lord Egremont as secretary of state, and Lord Egmont was made first lord of the admiralty.

The vacancy in the post to which the Duke of Bedford now succeeded was occasioned by the death of Earl Granville, who had passed a long life in the cabinet, who, as Lord Carteret, had exercised such weighty influence in the government, and who, in the words of Lord Chesterfield, possessed, "take it for all in all, the ablest head in England."

Notwithstanding his great and versatile powers, Granville had failed as a statesman, and with talent

* Letter from Lord Hardwicke on the subject of a ministerial negotiation in 1763. Ellis's Letters, second series, vol. iv., p. 470. See also the account of the contemporary press in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1763. Lord Hardwicke's is the most authentic narrative ; but it only professes to be a sketch. I have therefore thought myself at liberty to fill it up from the other accounts, one of which, that of Mr. Erskine in Ellis's Letters, is but little less trustworthy.

which might have commanded the support of a powerful party, he was compelled to owe his transient moments of power to the personal favour of the king. While he pretended to a leading station in the cabinet, the unpopularity of the government was always great in proportion to the extent of his influence; when he cast away from him ambition all parties were well content that he should hold the office he then chose; the emoluments of which his great extravagance had rendered necessary to him. He was almost as popular as a man as he was hated as a minister.

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The cause of Granville's failure may be found in his utter destitution of political principle. It has already been remarked that a high and chivalrous sense of honour, which will never yield to circumstances, or deviate one line from its forward track at the dictation of expediency, is an impediment to success in a statesman of a free country. But Carteret erred still more grievously on the other side. He entered, indeed, into public life under the auspices of Sunderland and Stanhope, and during the short time that those leaders and their section of a party existed, he continued to support them. But when he ceased to be a subordinate he renounced all allegiance either to party or patriotism. He cared nothing for principle, whether Whig or Tory; thought that system of government the best which preserved him in his office,

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and openly laughed at the idea of men acting from any other motive. Many who acted as Carteret spoke yet joined in the general condemnation of the *avowed* political infidel. Such doctrines not only annihilated patriotism and public spirit, but destroyed what have so often been their efficient substitutes, party principle and party honour. No political leader would venture to ally himself to a man who disclaimed alike the profession and the practice of fidelity ; and Carteret, who thought he held in the royal preference the surest tenure of office, was outlawed by both parties ; he was represented to the nation as a profligate favourite, by men who, in private life, admired his varied talent, and eagerly courted his society. Recently Earl Granville had become rather popular. The multitude, always prone to think their present evils their heaviest, looked back upon the reign of George II. as a golden era, and thought all who had been his ministers worthy of their worship. As the earl professedly took no part in public affairs, he was not involved in the unpopularity of Lord Bute ; he had outlived his political importance, and his death attracted little attention except among those who hoped to succeed him.

Parliament met on the 15th of November, and Wilkes and the North Briton, words which still rang through the nation, were, of course, the first topics of discussion. So anxious was the Grenville ministry

upon this subject, and so careful to anticipate the accusation of Wilkes, that the house of commons was not allowed to enter upon the consideration of the speech ; but a message was first delivered, informing the house of the steps that had been taken against Mr. Wilkes. This message was immediately taken into consideration, and after a long debate, of which no record remains, number forty-five, was, without a division,* voted a libel, and ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. Wilkes, who had in vain attempted to address the house before, was now heard, and the consideration of his complaint, as well as the further consideration of the king's message, was adjourned.

But in the house of lords an attack was on the same evening made, which affected Wilkes far more fatally. When, elated by the popular applause, he had set up a press in his own house, and reprinted the libels for which he had been marked out for prosecution, he forfeited the esteem of all moderate men, although the folly of his enemies might perhaps compel them to continue to him their support. Among other uses to which he put this press, he had determined to print,

* There was a division upon the terms. Some members thought it inexpedient to describe the paper as "tending to excite traitorous insurrections against his majesty's government ;" but no Whig appears to have defended the paper. Even this objection was overruled by a majority of 273 to 111.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xv., col. 1359.

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for some of his intimates, thirteen copies of a poem, called “An Essay on Woman.” There is no reason to suppose that this obscene and blasphemous production was composed by Wilkes; in sentiment it precisely agrees with the practices of the Mock Monks Club; and it was probably concocted in that society, and well known by its members. Wilkes had it printed with the greatest privacy, and from the few copies he struck off it is evident that the poem was only to be confidentially intrusted to some of his intimates who were ready to receive and admire it. While it was proceeding through the press, from conversation between the printers it became known to Mr. Kidgell a clergyman, who, having bribed the compositor to procure him a copy of the poem, proceeded with it to Lord Saville, exhibiting it as an invaluable weapon of offence against the troublesome patriot. Lord Saville, as a member of the Mock Monks Club, was doubtless already well acquainted with the poem; but he saw the value of this copy, and having arranged the necessary evidence, rose and denounced it in the house of lords. Bishop Warburton,* whose name had been used in one of the notes, complained of this breach of his privilege; the lords addressed the king to prosecute the printer, and Mr. Kidgell favoured the public with such an account of the

* These notes were written by Potter.—*Almon*.

book,* that every one was in an agony of curiosity to see the poem itself; a curiosity which was not long unsatisfied, since the book lay open upon the table of the house of lords. Mr. Kidgell's pamphlet contains a considerable quantity of such nonsense as the following: "Deliberately, and in a few words, I ask, for what one valuable consideration upon earth would a serious or a good man permit an hour's perusal of this execrable essay to his children? I reason but from what I feel within my own breast; for could I be persuaded that such a misfortune would probably happen to a child of mine, I should be the most afflicted parent in the world."† Thus, he reasons as though this essay had been intended for publication; and when met by the fact of the number of copies printed, he has recourse to the pitiful evasion that, in the eye of the law, printing is a publication. There can be little difference of opinion as to the fact that Mr. Kidgell and his ministerial coadjutors were the real disseminators of this obscenity. Had they merely brought forward the "Essay on Woman," and appealed to the morality of the country, to place no public confidence in a man who avowed such senti-

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* Churchill, in his poem of "The Author," alluding to this pamphlet, says of Kidgell, he

And whilst he rails at blasphemy
blasphemes."

† Most lusciously declaims 'gainst
luscious themes,

† "Narrative of a scandalous,
obscene, and exceedingly profane
libel, entitled 'An Essay on Wo-
man,'" p. 14.

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ments, their conduct, whatever success it might have obtained, would have been at least straightforward. But when the notorious profligate Lord Saville came forward as the conservator of public morals, and when it was pretended that religion and morality were about to fall before thirteen copies of an indecent poem, every one saw the hypocrisy; none doubted that it was the politician and not the poet that was aimed at; and although all men detested Wilkes in his private character, many, even of the most virtuous, thought that he was still to be defended. The Whigs saw that, under the cover of the odium of Wilkes's private vices, the Tories were advancing to attack the liberty of the subject and the privileges of the commons.

Although it had been solemnly decided by the court of common pleas that the parliamentary privilege from arrest extended to cases of libel, the commons were called upon by the ministry to pass a declaratory resolution against any such privilege, and after a debate of two days such a resolution was carried. Of the speeches delivered upon this occasion, Mr. Pitt's is the only one which has come down to us. Pitt founded his opposition upon the ground that such a surrender of the privilege of parliament would be highly dangerous to the freedom of parliament, and an infringement of the rights of the people. Whenever, he said, complaint was made against a member, the house could give him up: the

privilege, although reposed in parliament for ages, had never been abused. Why then was it to be voted away? Why was every member who did not vote with the minister to be put under a perpetual terror of imprisonment? For Wilkes and his writings, he attempted no defence. He condemned the whole series of "North Britons," and called them illiberal, unmanly, and detestable. He repudiated all connexion with their author, whom he called the blasphemer of his God and the libeller of his king: but he declared that having condemned the libel, it was neither consistent with the honour and safety of parliament, nor with the rights and interests of the people, to go one step further; the rest belonged to the courts below. The house, however, readily agreed to cover the ministerial error by a renunciation of their privileges. The resolution passed by a majority of two hundred and fifty-eight to one hundred and thirty-three, and the lords concurred.*

The Whigs appear, upon this occasion, to have acted upon constitutional grounds. The object of the privilege of parliament was to protect its

* But not until after a long debate and a protest from the minority. Earl Temple led the opposition, but the only speech which remains is that of Lord Lyttelton, which was afterwards published with his lordship's corrections.

The Duke of Newcastle refused to sign the protest on account of his friend, Lord Harwicke, who had declared his opinion against privilege.—*History of the Minority*, p. 240.

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members from the power of the crown, not to give impunity either to libellers or debtors; the power was given to meet extraordinary occasions, and should be dormant except when such occasions present themselves. The privileges of parliament discreetly exercised, are invaluable safeguards of the constitution, and should never be resigned. It is only in their abuse that they can be found injurious to the subject, and the abuse can readily be remedied without renouncing the right.

During the debates upon the North Briton, many members who had been attacked in that journal, took the opportunity of retaliating upon the author. Among others, Mr. Samuel Martin, who had been secretary to the treasury under the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Bute, speaking of the writer of the North Briton, said that whoever he was that, without a name and in the dark, was mean enough to stab another man's reputation, was a coward and a malignant scoundrel. Wilkes, who did not want personal courage, despatched a note to Martin, avowing the authorship, and in the duel which ensued was severely wounded. This event caused some delay in the proceedings of the house, and, at the adjournment for the Christmas recess, Wilkes was still unable to appear in his place.*

* Adolphus's Reign of George the Third. History of the Minority, &c.

Meanwhile his actions against those who had arrested him were in progress. The proceedings against Lord Egremont had abated by his death: those against Lord Halifax were delayed by various exertions of privilege, and even by standing out in contempt of court. The action against Wood was tried, and Chief Justice Pratt now solemnly decided that the general warrant upon which he was arrested was invalid. A verdict was returned for 1000*l.* damages, and verdicts for various amounts were also returned against the messengers who had executed the warrant.

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But although Wilkes was thus successful, and although his popularity was so great, that the city authorities, assisted by two hundred constables, had found it impossible to execute the order for burning the *North Briton*,* yet he had before him a prospect that might daunt the boldest spirit. There was a prosecution against him in the King's Bench for the *North Briton*, and another for the *Essay on Woman*, and there sat Lord Mansfield from whom he could expect neither sympathy or mercy. He had arrayed against him, also, the personal resentment of the king, and the indignant votes of the lords. The commons were only waiting until he could obey their

* See the testimony given before the house. The witnesses agree that the paper was not entirely burnt.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xv.

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summons, to pronounce their fiat of expulsion. Had Wilkes been animated by a genuine enthusiasm for the cause he had espoused, he would have braved the storm, and perhaps found an equipoise to his sufferings in the popular sympathy. But as he was merely acting a part, he saw all the real terrors of the approaching prosecutions, and resolved to withdraw. A few days after the adjournment for the recess, being sufficiently recovered to travel, he set out for Paris.

Upon the reassembling of the house in January, all further adjournment was refused, and some evidence of the authorship of the libel having been given at the bar, Wilkes was unanimously expelled the house. A subsequent motion to declare the illegality of general warrants occasioned great discussion; the resolution was narrowed by many amendments, and at length met by an adjournment; which was carried by a slender majority of two hundred and thirty-two against two hundred and eighteen.*

* Many desertions were of mission, and other appointments course necessary thus to swell the The opposition exclaimed very minority, and, among others of vehemently against this abuse of their supporters, General Conway patronage, and Horace Walpole voted against ministers upon this wrote his "Address to the Public occasion. For this he was shortly on the Dismissal of a General afterwards deprived of his com- Officer;" but the practice had

The conduct of ministers throughout this business was violent and hasty. It was neither dignified nor constitutional to prejudice by the votes of the two houses of parliament a question which was in the course of judicature by one of the ordinary courts. Nor was it in accordance with an Englishman's ideas of justice, to condemn and punish a man upon unsworn testimony, without allowing time for obtaining the opinion of a grand jury, or waiting until a process of outlawry had issued. The whole proceedings bear the stamp of vindictiveness; and the worthlessness of the person injured is no palliation to the injustice.*

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been too constant with both factions to render this a legitimate topic of party indignation.

* In the debate on the subject of the legality of general warrants, the ministerial orators were prompt to discover the inconvenience of the house of commons debating a point of law. Sir Fletcher Norton, the at-

torney-general, coarsely told the house, that upon such a subject he should value their resolution no more than that of a parcel of drunken porters.—See the pamphlets of the time, particularly the letter upon libels and general warrants, attributed to the Earl of Temple.

CHAPTER III.

The Grenville project for taxing America—The Stamp act—Biographical anecdotes of Charles Townshend—Debate on the Stamp act—Dissolution of the Grenville and formation of the Rockingham administration—Biographical anecdotes of Edmund Burke—Repeal of the Stamp act—Dissolution of the Rockingham administration.

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WE come now to the contemplation of a project of the Grenville administration far more eventful in its consequences than the expulsion of Mr. Wilkes.

Mr. Grenville's experience of the unpopularity of the cider excise had taught him the impossibility of laying on new taxes in a time of peace, and he looked around for some device by which the public expenditure might be met. With the common error of a weak politician, he immediately turned his attention to the distant Americans, as a people whose taxation would be highly productive, and whose com-

plaints would hardly be heard in St. Stephen's. In the committee of ways and means, therefore, a series of resolutions was proposed, imposing various duties upon imports, and making other arrangements which had always hitherto been submitted to by the colonists under the title of regulations of trade.

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But among these resolutions lurked one of far more comprehensive import. By the 14th, it was resolved, "That towards further defraying the said expenses, it may be proper to charge certain stamp duties in the said colonies and plantations." A bold assumption of the British parliament to levy a tax upon British subjects who were not represented within its walls.

As ordinary measures of finance, these resolutions attracted little notice, and no opposition; the resolution to impose a stamp duty is said to have passed late at night, at the rising of the house,* when probably few members heard, and still fewer understood, the question put. Having carried his resolutions, the minister deferred until next session the measure he intended to found upon them; and the king, in proroguing the parliament, congratulated the nation upon the wise regulations which had been established to augment the public revenues, to unite the

* Letter on Libels and Warrants.

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interests of the most distant possessions of the crown, and to secure their commerce with Great Britain.* The parliament remained prorogued until January of the following year.

Meanwhile the arrival of the parliamentary resolutions in America, diffused consternation throughout the colonies. The restrictions which England had been accustomed to impose for the aggrandizement of her own commerce were already found sufficiently burdensome; but this novel attempt was looked upon as the commencement of a system of taxation which was to be gradually extended to every article of commerce.† The American colonists were not sprung from a race accustomed to suffer in silence. The gloomy puritans who had sought in the depth of the everlasting forest, a refuge from the regal and episcopal tyranny of Charles I., had bequeathed to their descendants their fanaticism and their independence. The doctrines of freedom which had been advancing slowly and silently in Europe, had been the creed of generations in the new world. Upon receiving notice of England's intention to levy

* Parl. Hist., vol. xv., col. 1434. tained a seat in parliament.—

† It is said that the scheme of taxing the Americans was first suggested by an American named Hushe, who, having acquired a fortune in his native colony, had come to England, and had ob-
Gordon's American Revolution, vol. i., p. 157. Hushe may have made such a suggestion, but the idea was much older: the proposal was made to Sir Robert Walpole, who peremptorily rejected it.

a tax, they boldly inquired her right, and argued it in a manner which showed they would submit only to conviction that such a right existed. The colonies severally met in their councils of domestic legislation, and forwarded protests and remonstrances to the British parliament, and commissioned agents to represent their sentiments. The populace was in the highest state of excitement, and every hamlet in the wilderness sent forth its indignant cry against the purposed tyranny. Those who appealed to the justice of the mother country, urged that the claim was as unfounded, as the manner in which it was attempted to be enforced was tyrannical. The colonies, they said, taxed themselves: during the late war they had made great exertions in a quarrel, which was national between England and France; and had contracted debts which they were still bound to pay. As the monopolist of her commerce, England was already vastly benefited by her connexion with America, and protection in time of war was the least recompence which could be given for such advantage. No benefit could accrue to them from prolonged tranquillity, or successful war, but what would be a source of ultimate profit to England. America, therefore, owed to England nothing, but the obligation of having sent forth her first colonists—an obligation of much too equivocal a nature to bear a close inspection. Such were the

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III. their agents in England.
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Early in the session of 1765, the threatened bill was introduced. But although the agents for the colonies had appealed to the nation against the imposition, no firm array of Whigs appeared to resist the contemplated tyranny. The great commoner was confined to his chamber, and the Whigs in this house of commons were by no means numerous. But the subserviency of the house of commons is not to be thus accounted for. A better solution of the silence of the Whigs is, that the contemplated system of American taxation was highly popular in England. Englishmen, galled by the burdensome imposts which they bore at home, looked upon the minister as the discoverer of an unknown mine of wealth. "In England," testifies an eyewitness,* "we cried out for new taxes on America; whilst they cried out that they were nearly crushed with those which the war and their own grants had brought upon them." From the same authority we receive a general account of the debates upon this bill. Recurring to the subject, some years afterwards, Mr. Burke said in the house of commons, "As to the fact of a strenuous opposition to the Stamp act, I sat as a stranger in your gallery when the act was

* Burke's Speech on American Taxation.

under consideration. Far from any thing inflammatory, I never heard a more languid debate in this house. No more than two or three gentlemen, as I remember, spoke against the act, and that with great reserve and remarkable temper. There was but one division in the whole progress of the bill, and the minority did not reach to more than thirty-nine or forty. In the house of lords I do not recollect that there was any debate or division at all: I am sure there was no protest. In fact, the affair passed with so very, very little noise, that in town they scarcely knew the nature of what you were doing.”*

The most eloquent among the supporters of the present ministry and their new measure was Charles Townshend. He was the second son of the third Viscount Townshend, and had entered parliament, in 1747, as a Whig. He had already served under Pitt in the great struggle for a national militia, and, afterwards, when his brother was chosen by his leader to accomplish the work, Charles cordially assisted. He had, under the Pitt administration, held several subordinate appointments; but, upon the dissolution of the Whig cabinet, the offer of the post of secretary at war gained him to the Earl of Bute. Under the Grenville administration he held the office of first

* Burke's Speech on American Taxation.

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lord of trade and the plantations, a situation which identified him with the question before the house.*

The versatility of Townshend's political conduct had deservedly obtained for him the appellation of the weathercock. The extent of his powers must be judged from a quotation from that specimen of eloquence in which Burke has embalmed his memory, and from which every other sketch has been borrowed. In his recapitulation of the policy of England towards America, and of the characters of the statesmen by whom that policy had been directed, the orator, closing his eulogium upon Lord Chatham, says, "Then, sir, even before this splendid orb was entirely set, and while the western horizon was in a blaze with his descending glory, on the opposite quarter of the heavens arose another luminary, and for his hour became lord of the ascendant.

"This light too is passed and set for ever; you understand, to be sure, that I am speaking of Charles Townshend, whom I cannot even now remember without some degree of sensibility. In truth, sir, he was the delight and ornament of this house, and the charm of every private society which he honoured with his presence. Perhaps there never arose in this country, nor in any country, a man of more pointed and finished wit; and, where his passions were not concerned, of a

* Collins's Peerage, by Sir E. Brydges.

more refined, exquisite, and penetrating judgment. If he had not so great a stock as some have had who flourished formerly, of knowledge long treasured up, he knew better, by far, than any man I ever was acquainted with, how to bring together, within a short time, all that was necessary to establish, illustrate, and to decorate that side of the question he supported. He stated his matter skilfully and powerfully; he particularly excelled in a most luminous explanation and display of his subject; his style of argument was neither trite and vulgar nor subtle and abstruse; he hit the house just between wind and water; and, not being troubled with too anxious a zeal for any matter in question, he was never more tedious or more earnest than the preconceived opinions and present temper of his hearers required, to whom he was always in perfect unison. He conformed exactly to the temper of the house; and he seemed to guide because he was always sure to follow it." Charles Townshend was apparently what Lord Carteret had been, a man of great genius without political principle, a beautiful vessel without ballast, driven aside from her appointed course by every breath that shook her sails. The motives which influenced Carteret and Townshend were different; the former sought power and emolument, the latter was ruled by a passion for preserving, under all changes, and in every conjuncture, the admiration and support of the ma-

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jority in the house of commons. They differed in their ruling desires; but the cause that rendered their desires their rule of conduct was in each the same.

Upon the present occasion Townshend supported Mr. Grenville; concluding a piece of declamation which he probably did not expect to hear answered, with the question, "And these Americans, children planted by our care, nourished by our indulgence, protected by our arms until they are grown to a good degree of strength and opulence, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy load of national expense which we lie under?"

The sole opposition to the bill at this stage was a reply of Colonel Barre, which would seem to have produced rather more effect both within and without the house, than the description of the debate given by Mr. Burke would appear to imply. It probably, however, was read with more attention than it was heard. Those who are in the habit of listening to the debates in the house of commons know that the most eloquent harangue would sound tame and languid amid the marked inattention and continual conversation of an unwilling audience.

Colonel Barre, after arguing the question, applied himself particularly to the concluding words of Charles Townshend's speech. "*They, planted by your care?*" he said. "No, your oppressions planted them in

America. They fled from your tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country, where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable ; and, among others, to the cruelties of a savage foe, the most subtle, and I will take upon me to say, the most formidable of any people upon God's earth ; and yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all hardships with pleasure, compared with those they suffered in their own country from the hands of those that should have been their friends. *They, nourished by your indulgence ?* They grew by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them, who were, perhaps, the deputies of deputies to some members of this house—sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions, to prey upon them—men, whose behaviour, on many occasions, has caused the blood of these sons of liberty to recoil within them—men promoted to the highest seats of justice ; some of whom, to my knowledge, were glad, by going to a foreign country, to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own. *They protected by your arms ?* They have nobly taken up arms in your defence, have exerted a valour amidst their constant and laborious industry, for the defence of a country whose frontier was drenched in blood, while its interior parts yielded all its little savings to your

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emolument ; and, believe me—remember I this day told you so—that same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still—prudence forbids me to say more. God knows I do not at this time speak from motives of party heat ; what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me in general knowledge and experience the respectable body of this house may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant with that country. The people, I believe, are as truly loyal as any subjects the king has ; but a people jealous of their liberties, and who will vindicate them if ever they should be violated.”*

Such is the most perfect version of a speech which is known only from the reports transmitted by the American agents to their constituents. Upon the second reading of the bill petitions were offered against it from the London merchants, as well as from the colonies. The minister, however, urged the standing order of the house, that no petition should be

* Gordon's History of the American Revolution, vol. i., p. 160. The account given of this debate in the Parliamentary History is meager and incorrect. The speech of Charles Townshend is there attributed to Mr. Grenville, and that of Colonel Barre considerably

curtailed. The circumstance of our deriving our knowledge of this debate from the Americans, is strongly illustrative of the fact that the decision was an object of intense interest in America, but of little or none in London.

received against a money bill, and they were not received. General Conway and Alderman Beckford, two men who, in the present disorganized state of the Whig party, were conspicuous as occasional leaders,* now, for the first time, denied the power of parliament to tax the colonies. The minister broadly and boldly asserted the right, and a large majority of the house supported him. The bill then passed. Thus was America lost to England.

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Mr. Grenville and his colleagues held their offices by the tenure of an entire obedience to the courtiers. Hitherto the two sections of the party, the king's friends at court and the king's friends in the cabinet had agreed; but disputes now occurred upon the distribution of the patronage, of which the courtiers were inclined to claim an unreasonable share, and some differences of opinion arose as to the terms of the Regency bill, which the king's recent illness had rendered necessary. Stormy discussions had also taken place in the cabinet; the ministers had sometimes been intemperate in their remonstrances, and the

* General Conway had supported ministers upon every occasion previously to the vote upon general warrants. He had voted for the cider excise, and had several times stood up to speak against Wilkes, and even after his

adverse vote he declared to a minister that he was not, nor intended to be engaged in opposition. — *History of the Minority*. — See the proceedings in the commons upon this officer's dismissal. — *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 66.

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Duke of Bedford had, upon one occasion, offered a gross personal insult to his sovereign.

It was resolved, therefore, that Mr. Grenville should be dismissed ; and the Earl of Bute applied to the Duke of Cumberland for assistance to form a government which might enjoy some public confidence. The duke, who had been throughout his life connected with the Whig party, applied to Lord Temple, but without success ; and afterwards to Mr. Pitt. The great commoner answered that he had no objection to go to St. James's if he could carry the constitution with him ; but, upon descending to details, it was found impossible to accommodate his demands with the continuance of the court influence. The existing ministry was then applied to, but Grenville and his coadjutors now required complete emancipation from the sway of the Earl of Bute, and power to conduct the government. These demands were deemed inadmissible : recourse was again had to the Duke of Cumberland, who now opened a negotiation with the Duke of Newcastle. This ancient Whig leader, although his shadow now fell upon his grave, was still greedy of power : he readily entertained the proposition, and exerted his utmost influence to obviate difficulties, and to reconcile differences. He was at length successful : the event was the formation of the Rockingham administration ; constructed, not from that portion of the now disunited Whig

party which stood highest in principle and popularity, but containing, nevertheless, elements of better government, and giving promise of the prevention of the civil war which was now upon the point of bursting forth.

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In this cabinet the Marquis of Rockingham was first lord of the treasury, General Conway was secretary of state and leader of the house of commons,* having the Duke of Grafton as his colleague in the secretaryship. The Duke of Newcastle was lord privy seal.

Neither Pitt nor the Earl of Temple approved of the new cabinet; they thought that the Pelham Whigs had seized upon the first occasion to recover office, without stipulating for a change of measures or destroying the power of the favourite; they knew them to be the Pelham Whigs of George II.'s reign; and, although their recent opposition had aroused among them the fire of their party principle, Pitt doubted whether it would not be extinguished at the door of the cabinet.

Upon reviewing their strength the Newcastle phalanx found that, during the few years they had been in opposition, great ravages had been made in their ranks. In subordinates they were especially deficient; of these, some had risen to the rank of

* History of the Minority. Life of the Earl of Chatham.

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leaders ; but the far greater number were to be seen in the camp of the enemy. Searching for adherents who should compensate these losses, the heads of this administration introduced upon the stage of public life one of the most extraordinary of those highly-gifted men who were now about to rise, and extinguish, by their brilliancy, the waning luminaries of this generation. The recommendation of several friends had made known to the Marquis of Rockingham the name of Edmund Burke ; he was appointed private secretary to that nobleman.

Edmund Burke, born on the 1st of January, 1730, was a younger son of an eminent Dublin attorney. A delicate and apparently consumptive constitution debarred him, when in childhood, from the robust sports of his brothers, and condemned him to solitude and thought.* In his twelfth year he was sent to a school at Ballitore, which was established by the quakers, and became famous for the number of illustrious men whom it sent forth. Here he evinced great readiness and perseverance ; he mastered the rudiments of the classics with a facility which left him leisure for other and, to his boyish taste, more

* This was not forgotten in after years. "I cannot think," soliloquized Richard Burke, as he sat in the house of commons and listened to the enthusiastic applause which followed his brother's eloquence, "how he has contrived to monopolize all the talent of the family ;—but he was always at work when we were at play."

congenial studies. History and poetry were not avoided, but the old romances, Palmerin of England, Don Belianis of Greece, and others, such as these, were temptations which could at any time draw him from his study or his sport.* From Ballitore he, in 1744, was removed to Trinity College, Dublin, where he was looked upon as a young man of superior, but unpretending talents, more anxious to acquire than to display knowledge. His assiduity and regularity were rewarded with a scholarship.

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While at the university, Burke declared his political sentiments by some letters in which he ridiculed Dr. Lucas, in his day so eminent as an Irish patriot, and Brooke, the author of *Gustavus Vasa*, who was as an author equally in favour with the patriot party, and whom Burke, in allusion to the reported rapidity of his composition, satirized as *Diabetes*. Thus it appears, that from his youth, Burke attached himself to Newcastle's section of moderate or aristocratic Whigs. These performances attracted no attention, and are only known from the reports of his friends.

Edmund was intended by his father for the bar, and having graduated at Trinity, he left Dublin for London, where he became a member of the Middle Temple.

* Here is the germ of that such gorgeousness to the elo-
imaginative faculty which gave quence of the man.

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Hitherto Edmund Burke had obtained only the reputation of a respectable mediocrity, and had been outstripped, both at school and college, by many unremembered examples of precocious talent. His comparative obscurity at college may be readily accounted for. Burke, although far from being blind to the beauties of the classic writers of Greece and Rome, and although well appreciating the pleasure and the profit to be derived from their learning, their sentiment, and their language, was rather careful to enjoy their beauties and imbibe their spirit, than to spend his energies in settling a disputed passage, or encumber his memory with their various readings. He extended his studies beyond the classics, descended into modern history, expatiated in the fields of science, wandered in the regions of romance, delivered criticisms upon Milton, and even himself perpetrated some poetry. No mortal genius could, in the short time of a college course of education, become proficient in all these studies, and the universities offer no rewards for multifarious mediocrity.

In London, Burke continued his reading, and found congenial minds. His mornings were devoted to arduous study, his evenings were spent in conversation. Several years were thus passed, during which the student laid up stores of general, but very little legal knowledge. Why he neglected his appointed profession we are not told: it was from no

disgust for its studies, for he afterwards spoke of it as one of the first and noblest of human sciences; “a science which does more to quicken and invigorate the understanding, than all the other kinds of learning put together.”* May he not have doubted his success, or felt impatient of the interval which must elapse before he could expect remuneration for his labour? Qualified as Burke undoubtedly was to become the first lawyer of the age, such doubts, nevertheless, were not unreasonable. He saw around him many whom he had seen successful and honoured at the university, unknown and unemployed in the courts of law; he saw many of these, disgusted at their ill success, turn again to literature. Their success excited his emulation, and literature, at first divided, then absorbed his attention.

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During this period, he formed several designs for his future course; at one time, he sought the professorship of logic, at Glasgow; at another, he contemplated proceeding to America. In his first pursuit, he was unsuccessful; the second, was forbidden by his father. His preparation, however, for a contest for the logic chair, at Glasgow, gave at the time a direction to his studies, and probably produced his “Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful;” the magnificent result

* Speech on American Taxation.

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of the continued and laborious revisions of a juvenile essay.

Burke now tried the strength of his wing. He became a contributor to many of the periodicals of the day; the superiority of his mind was admitted within his own society of templars, and his reputation became extended beyond that circle. Of the drama, he was a devoted admirer, and he soon became conspicuous at the Grecian coffee-house, the common resort of lawyers, authors, and actors. Here he made the acquaintance of Mr. Murphy, who had, at this time, attempted the stage as a profession, and was immediately known to all the dramatic authors, actors, and critics. At Garrick's table he met the first men of the age: at Macklin's debating society he made the first essay of his powers of oratory. In the acquaintance of Miss Woffington he had a still more potential introduction. This lady, whose beauty and vivacity rendered her the Aspasia of the day, was honoured with the applause of poets and the homage of nobility. Her house was the resort of all to whom rank or talent gave the privilege of access; and as a climax to her honours she had been elected the only female member of the Beef-steak Club. Here Burke was always welcome; and it has been hinted that his intimacy with his fair hostess was more strict than Plato would have advised. At her house he greatly extended his acquaintance, and is said to

have been introduced and recommended by her to the Duke of Newcastle, who was then prime minister. The duke, no doubt in accordance with his character, promised much, and had the next minute forgotten that he existed.

In 1756, Burke published his “Vindication of Natural Society ;” an ironical imitation of Bolingbroke’s style and argument, which appearing while the world was yet troubled by the appearance of the viscount’s philosophical works occasioned some sensation. This tract was published anonymously, as the nature of the composition required, and could give no immediate reputation to its author.

In a few months the philosophical “Inquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful” followed, and at once established Edmund Burke’s fame. He was now admitted as an equal in the circle where the most celebrated authors of the day shone. But he did not long enjoy his celebrity. A fit of illness, induced by study, or by his constitutional delicacy, compelled him to resort to Bath, from the waters of which city he had before found benefit. Here he met with his countryman and acquaintance, Dr. Nugent, who enjoyed considerable reputation and practice as a physician, and who invited Burke to take up his residence at his house. Dr. Nugent had a daughter ; and the result of the daily intercourse between the young people was a mutual attachment

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and a speedy marriage. This connexion was highly fortunate. Amid the turmoil of political contention, disgusted by neglect, fretful from defeat, or jaded by study, how often does the man of genius require some pillow upon which his ambition and his hopes may sleep ; some oasis in the waste, girded by a circle which they cannot pass ! Burke had this refuge in his home. There he ever found one who would cheer him in his despondency, and exult with him in his fortune ; one whose mind was capable of communion with his own, whose love was idolatry, and whose welcome was always unclouded. Burke was accustomed to say, that “ every care vanished the moment he entered under his own roof.”*

Dr. Nugent accompanied his daughter to London, and they resided together in Wimpole-street ; an arrangement very advantageous to Burke, whose resources were but a slender allowance from his father, in addition to the emolument he derived from

* A character of Mrs. Burke it is a beauty not arising from written by her husband is preserved features, from complexion, or in Prior's Life of Burke, vol. i., p. from shape. She has all three in 62, with the title of “The Idea of a a higher degree ; but it is not by Perfect Wife.” It was presented these she touches an heart ; it is by the husband on an anniversary all that sweetness of temper, of his marriage ; and is, of benevolence, innocence, and sensibility, which a face can express, course, a specimen of brilliant that forms her beauty.” eulogy. Take the first descriptive passage :—“She is handsome, but

his connexion with the periodicals, and his editorship of Dodsley's Annual Register.

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Burke's powers of abstract philosophical speculation were made known by his first avowed production ; his conversational ability was tested by that great dictator over tea-tables, Johnson. They met at Garrick's, and those who sat around were astonished ; first, at the boldness of the man who dared to dispute with Johnson, but still more to see the great lexicographer submit to contradiction. But a greater than Johnson was there. The doctor felt the presence of a superior genius, and found himself excelled in his own peculiar excellence. Johnson was too proud and too able, to feel jealous : he every where celebrated the powers of the young Irishman, and continued ever after to regard him with the highest admiration. "Don't let Burke up," was Johnson's injunction when he was ill. "That fellow calls forth all my powers ; if I were to see him now it would kill me."

Johnson's remark is well known, that if you met Burke for the first time in the street where you were stopped by a drove of oxen, and you and he stepped aside for shelter, he'd talk to you in such a manner that when you parted, you would say, "This is an extraordinary man :" it was once remarkably verified. After Burke had attained the zenith of his fame, he was travelling through Lichfield accompanied by a friend ; the place was then interesting to Burke as

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the birthplace of Johnson, and the two travellers strolled towards the cathedral. One of the canons seeing that they were strangers, politely offered to point out the objects most worthy of curiosity. A conversation ensued, but in a few moments the clergyman's pride of superior local information was completely subdued by the copious and minute knowledge displayed by one of the strangers. Whatever topic the object before them suggested, whether the theme was architecture or antiquities, some obscure passage in ecclesiastical history, or some question in the life of an early saint, the stranger touched it as with a sunbeam; his information appeared universal; his mind clear intellect without one particle of ignorance. A few minutes after their separation, the canon was met hurrying through the street. "I have had," he said, "quite an adventure; I have been conversing, for this half-hour past, with a man of the most extraordinary powers of mind and extent of information which it has ever been my fortune to meet with, and I am now going to the inn, to ascertain, if possible, who this stranger is."

In 1761, Burke, through the interest of Lord Charlemont, obtained the office of private secretary to Mr. William Gerard Hamilton, better known by the name of Single-speech Hamilton, who was then about to set out for Ireland in the capacity of public secretary. This gentleman, who early in life, de-

serted Lincoln's-inn for the house of commons, had distinguished himself by one brilliant speech, which obtained for him a reputation that led to his appointment in 1756, as a lord of trade under Lord Halifax. Henceforward he was dumb in the house of commons, and the genuineness of his singular coruscation began to be doubted. Some of those who ridiculed his silence affirmed that Burke had written his celebrated harangue: but Hamilton's laurel-leaf had been plucked before his connexion with Burke had commenced, and notwithstanding the sneers of his contemporaries, it was probably his own. Hamilton was a fop in literature;—one who would not write a note to his most intimate friend without considerable study and careful revision. The speech that had gained him such great applause had doubtless cost him infinite labour to write, to learn, and to practise. Such efforts cannot be frequently made; and, if made, cannot always be successful. Hamilton had obtained what he sought—a place. Such a fastidious writer could not hope to be a good extemporaneous speaker; and as his incapacity to reply must soon become known, he acted wisely in eschewing oratory altogether.

Under this gentleman Burke returned to Ireland, and obtained, through his influence, a pension of 300*l.* a year. This connexion was not of long continuance; a rupture took place, which Burke, writing to Mr.

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Flood, thus describes : “ It is very true that there is an eternal rupture between me and Hamilton. The occasion of our difference was not any act whatsoever on my part ; it was entirely on his ; by a voluntary, but most insolent and intolerable demand, amounting to no less than a claim of servitude during the whole course of my life, without leaving me at any time a power, either of getting forward with honour or retiring with tranquillity. This was really and truly the substance of his demand upon me ; to which I need not tell you I refused, with some degree of indignation, to submit. On this we ceased to see each other or to correspond, a good while before you left London. He then commenced, through the intervention of others, a negotiation with me, in which he showed as much of meanness in his proposals as he had done of arrogance in his demands ; but as all these proposals were vitiated by the taint of that servitude with which they were all mixed, his negotiation came to nothing.”*

Burke now offered to resign the pension he enjoyed, since he had obtained it through Hamilton’s influence, and that gentleman thought proper to accept his offer : it was assigned to Mr. Hamilton’s attorney.

This paltry conduct of the Irish secretary was pro-

* Prior’s Life of Burke, vol. i., p. 115.

bably prompted less by avarice than by revenge. He felt the stronger genius of his subordinate, and adopted this petty persecution as a tribute to his wounded vanity.

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Burke was now known among the political leaders, and his services in Ireland were appreciated. While pursuing a course of diligent preparation—of daily study of the constitution of the government and the resources of the kingdom, and nightly attendance in the gallery of the house of commons—he was summoned to undertake the post of private secretary to the new premier. A seat in parliament was now provided for him. By an agreement with Lord Verney, he was returned for Wendover, in Buckinghamshire, his lordship being, as an equivalent, gazetted a privy councillor.

In ordinary cases, to a political aspirant, a seat in the house of commons is but the starting-point of his career : to Burke it was a high and long-ambitioned vantage-ground, the acquisition of continued and laborious toil. He had gained the top of the Alp, and although many obstacles still intervened, he could look down upon the prospect before him as the Italy of his hopes.

The new senator did not remain silent in the house ; the familiar acquaintance with forms so indispensable in a debater had been acquired by him while sitting a stranger in the gallery. Henceforward his deeds belong to history.

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The policy pursued by the Rockingham ministry was of a temporizing character, calculated to awaken no enthusiasm either in their friends or their enemies, but rather to lessen the activity of both. / As honourable and independent men they scorned the trammels of the courtiers ; they would not hear of the party which called its members the king's friends ; but made the attempt to break their corps, to discountenance their doctrines, and to revive connexions of a different kind ; to restore the principles and policy of the Whigs, and to reanimate the cause of liberty by ministerial countenance.* But there was no energy in the body to effect the intention ; / the cabinet was formed from the rear-guard of the Whigs ; men who were timorous and suspicious of their own principles, held them bound in the chains of aristocratic expediency and personal interest, and dared not to loose them because they knew not their power or their ultimate tendency.

This indecision was strikingly manifest upon the American question. They brought forward a bill declaratory of the right of Great Britain to make laws binding the British colonies in North America in all cases whatsoever, yet, at the same time, proposed to repeal the Stamp act. Thus abandoning the solid advantage, but clinging to the obnoxious principle — shrinking, themselves, from the com-

* Burke's Thoughts on the present Discontents.

mission of injustice, but providing a ready excuse for any less scrupulous successors.]

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In the debates upon this subject, which commenced on the first day of the session, and formed the prominent feature throughout, Pitt reappeared. When the Stamp act passed he had been ill in bed; he now stood forward to vindicate the natural rights of his fellow men, declaring that when the resolution to tax America was taken, so great was the agitation of his mind, that if he could have endured to be carried in his bed he would have solicited some kind hand to have laid him down on the floor of the house, to have borne his testimony against it.* This kingdom, he said, has no right to lay a tax upon the colonies: the commons of America have ever been in possession of this their constitutional right of giving and granting their own money. They would have been slaves if they had not enjoyed it. He drew a distinction between the right of legislation and the right of taxation, and instanced the British house of peers as an estate possessed of the one without the other.† “I rejoice,” he said, “that America has resisted—three millions of people so dead to all

* Parl. History, vol. xvi., col. 98. have rights of taxation as well as yourselves: rights which they will

† “If taxation be a part of simple legislation, the crown, the peers, are equally legislative powers with the commons, and claim, which they will exercise, whenever the principle can be supported by power.”—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 100.

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the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest. Upon the whole," he concluded, "I will beg leave to tell the house what is really my opinion. It is, that the Stamp act be repealed, absolutely, totally, and immediately. That the reason for the repeal be assigned, because it was founded on an erroneous principle. At the same time let the sovereign authority of this country over the colonies be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend to every point of *legislation* whatsoever. That we may bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power whatsoever, except that of taking their money out of their pockets without their consent."

Thus, broadly and unhesitatingly, was Mr. Pitt's opinion upon this grand constitutional question delivered. In supporting the Repeal bill he was assisted by the maiden eloquence of Burke, who thus made his first essay in the cause of liberty, in defence of men with arms in their hands, whom Whigs called sons of liberty, whom Tories execrated as rebels. Whether the eloquence of the new member burst forth in all the gorgeousness of its meridian display, or whether its perfection was the result of time, we cannot now determine.* Its appearance was, at least,

* He was, certainly, for some time after his appearance in the house of commons, by no means so highly estimated as Charles

sufficient to fix the attention of the house, and called forth a smile of encouragement from William Pitt. In the words of Johnson, his two speeches on the repeal of the Stamp act filled the town with wonder. The Tories, led on by George Grenville, vehemently opposed the Repeal bill, asserting the absolute vassalage of the colonies, and asking contemptuously when they had been emancipated? They were answered by the question, When had they been enslaved? and the question thus debated, was a real struggle between Whig and Tory principles. "It was a time," said Burke, afterwards recurring to this struggle, "for a man to act in. We had powerful enemies, but we had faithful and determined friends, and a glorious cause. We had a great battle to fight, but we had the means of fighting. We did fight that day, and conquer."* The Repeal bill passed, but so also did the Declaratory act. Of the debates in the commons upon the latter we have no record; it was carried because Pitt and his friends had now the ministerial Whigs as well as the Tories against them. Burke's voice had been first heard in the house calling for the repeal of an unjust impost; may we not fear that, with the usual indecision of the sect

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Townshend. Lord Charlemont, "Townshend was the orator, the writing to a friend, and describing rest were speakers."—*Thackeray's a debate in which Townshend and Life of Chatham.*
Burke had taken part, says, * Speech on American Taxation.

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 dogma?

In the lords this Declaratory bill received its condemnation from the lips of that great Whig lawyer who, as Chief Justice Pratt, had habituated the law courts to the voice of constitutional liberty, and who now, raised to the house of lords by the title of Lord Camden, carried the same principles and the same language into that assembly. "My position," he said, "is this—I repeat it—I will maintain it to my last hour—taxation and representation are inseparable ;—this position is founded on the laws of nature ; it is more, it is in itself an eternal law of nature ; for whatever is a man's own is absolutely his own ; no man hath a right to take it from him without his consent either expressed by himself or his representative ; whoever attempts to do this attempts an injury ; whoever does it commits a robbery ; he throws down and destroys the distinction between liberty and slavery."

These debates were also remarkable for the proof they afforded of disunion between Mr. Pitt and Earl Temple. Earl Temple opposed the Repeal bill in the lords, and his name is attached to all the Tory protests entered upon this subject.

The bills became law, and the colonists, caring

* Parl. History, vol. xvi., col. 180.

little for the parliamentary declaration, and feeling only the cessation of the evil, were pacified.

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This mighty question being thus settled, the ministers proposed to give some further proofs of their party faith. Resolutions, condemnatory of general warrants and the seizure of private papers, were proposed and adopted; and a bill founded upon them passed the commons, but failed in the lords. They repealed the cider tax, an impost which was almost as odious in the cider counties as the Stamp act in the colonies; and they were certainly the first administration which encouraged public meetings, and discountenanced the practice of removing military officers for their votes in parliament.*

The first of these measures entailed upon them a visit from Mr. Wilkes, who had been employing himself, during his outlawry, in making a tour of Italy, preparing an edition of Churchill's poems, and designing a history of England; but had never been without good intelligence of what was going on at home. Upon the formation of the Rockingham ministry he made another application for the embassy to Constantinople, which was again vacant. In a letter to his friend, Mr. Cotes, he expresses his expectation that the king might be forced into a con-

* See Burke's short tract, called "A short Account of a late short Administration."

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sent. In 1764 he wrote to the same person, "If government means peace or friendship with me, I then breathe no longer hostility; and, between ourselves, if they would send me to Constantinople as ambassador, that is all I should wish."* His application was either refused or evaded, and the patriot quickly altered his style. He now began to threaten, "I believe the Scot is the breath of this ministry's nostrils. It depends, however, on them whether Mr. Wilkes is their friend or their enemy. If he starts as the latter he will lash them with scorpion rods, and they are already prepared: I wish, however, we may be friends."† Wilkes's threats were as little regarded as his solicitations; and, pressed by his poverty and his resentment, he boldly returned to London. The ministry were, as he anticipated, alarmed at his presence, and the patriot proportioned his demands to their fears. These demands were rejected; for no ministry could dare to mention the name of Wilkes to George III., except as an object for prosecution; but Burke was despatched to negotiate with him, and to offer an eleemosynary pension from the ministers, to be paid from their private purses, in proportions regulated according to the emoluments of their offices, and to cease upon their

* Almon's Life and Correspondence of Wilkes, vol. i., p. 62, and vol. ii., p. 53.

† Ibid., vol. ii., p. 214.

resignation. The offer was accepted, and Wilkes returned to Paris.

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On the 6th of June parliament was prorogued.

On the 2d of August the Gazette informed the nation that the Rockingham administration was dissolved.

CHAPTER IV.

State of the Whig and Tory parties—The Chatham administration—Unpopularity and imbecility of Lord Chatham—Charles Townshend's project to tax America—Death of Townshend.—End of the Chatham administration.

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THE cause of the early overthrow to the Rockingham administration was a want of energy and decision : they were too much Whigs to be welcome to the court, too little, to be objects of interest to the people. The king who had received them unwillingly, parted with them with pleasure : the news was heard with indifference.

To Mr. Pitt was intrusted the formation of the new cabinet, a task which the state of parties rendered one of no ordinary difficulty. The Tories were now clustered thickly around the throne, they occupied all the offices of the household, and pos-

sessed every avenue of the court, and their members were daily augmented by the accession of all those who thought the favour of the sovereign more valuable than the patronage of the minister. A few years had created a great change in the appearance of this party. Six years ago it consisted chiefly of country gentlemen who advocated in parliament the principles upon which they governed their tenantry in the country, denounced the corruption of the Whigs, and thought slightly of the title of the house of Hanover. Since then a Tory king of that house had ascended the throne: the strength of the party had become courtiers, favourites, king's friends.

These were, however, consentient; but the Whigs were, as they generally have been, split into divisions. Of these, Pitt, supported by Lord Camden and a few others, led that which was favoured with the popular suffrages. These men were the pioneers of Whiggism; they strode boldly forward, guided only by the compass of political principle, satisfied that while they pursued this monitor they could not err, and careless of the impediments which sometimes arose in their path. Behind these, but at a considerable distance, came the Rockingham phalanx; strong in family connexions, aristocratic influence, and wealth. This body was formed of men who, from accident or education, had assumed the same guide as their onward friends, but who had never at-

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tained a philosophical conviction of its unerring truth. They followed it so long as the course it pointed out appeared otherwise expedient, but always slowly and timorously : always cautiously exploring, lest its track should lead them across some favourite prejudice, or bring them to tread upon some personal interest. Should such impediments cross their path, a long and dubious halt invariably succeeded: the deserters immediately became numerous, and no sooner had the most resolute passed the disputed spot, than they saw those whom they had left behind go over to the enemy. These deserters were always the most active in subsequent attacks. Not unfrequently they made to themselves a new and very different compass ; and while remaining stationary with the Tories, declared that they were the true and original Whigs.

Such was the state of the party which Pitt again undertook to unite in the service of their country. Notwithstanding their late estrangement, his first overture was made to Lord Temple, whom he proposed to place at the head of the treasury. An interview took place, and Pitt submitted his list of appointments : but Earl Temple had now become involved in Tory alliances, and refused to take office unless Earl Gower and Lord Lyttelton were admitted to the cabinet. These conditions were peremptorily rejected ; and Temple saying that Mr.

Pitt was evidently determined to be sole and absolute dictator, put an end to the conference.

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Failing in his attempt to unite the Whigs, Mr. Pitt now endeavoured, by assembling around him his own friends, and filling up their numbers from the Tories, to obtain a coalition ministry, which he could manage at his will. In this design he was doubtless confirmed by the artifices of the courtiers, and the homage proffered to him by Lord Bute. At the head of the treasury he placed the Duke of Grafton, a nobleman who professed himself a Whig, who had always hitherto acted with that party, but whose only claim to that title appeared to be the devoted attachment he professed for Mr. Pitt. He had, for a short time, held the seals under the Rockingham administration. When he resigned them, he declared in the house of lords that he retired, because the government wanted strength and efficiency, and that he knew but one man who could give them. Under him, he said, he would serve, not only as a general-officer but as a private soldier; he would even take up a spade and a mattock at his command.* This nobleman Mr. Pitt named as one who would be an obedient vicegerent. Lord Camden was made lord chancellor. The Earl of Shelburn, a young nobleman, who had warmly attached himself

* Chesterfield's Letters to his Son.

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to Pitt, who was animated by an affection for the principles of his party, and whose talents, although not calculated to shine in posts of the highest order, were sound and valuable in a secondary station, was created secretary of state. Thus far Pitt had secured the support of professed friends : for their coadjutors, he chose Lord Northington, whom he had dismissed from the chancellorship, and made president of the council ; Charles Townshend, the promoter of the Stamp act, as chancellor of the exchequer and manager of the house of commons ; while General Conway, its great opponent, was continued as secretary of state.

The arrangements of the inferior offices were equally incongruous. At the different boards politicians of every shade were seen sitting together. It was altogether a disconnected mass, which, Mr. Pitt thought, being divided in itself, would only agree to be ruled by him. Burke afterwards described this cabinet as “a piece of joinery, so crossly indented and whimsically dovetailed ; a cabinet so variously inlaid ; such a piece of diversified mosaic ; such a tessellated pavement without cement ; here a bit of black stone, there a bit of white ; patriots and courtiers ; kings, friends, and republicans ; Whigs and Tories ; treacherous friends and open enemies. It was, indeed, a very curious show, but utterly unsafe to touch, and unsure to stand on. The colleagues whom he had as-

sorted at the same board stared at each other, and were obliged to ask, ‘Sir, your name? Sir, you have the advantage of me.—Mr. Such-a-one.—I beg a thousand pardons.’ I venture to say it did so happen, that persons had a single office divided between them who had never spoke to each other in their lives, until they found themselves, they knew not how, pigging together heads and points in the same truckle-bed.”*

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But the most singular feature in this arrangement was the part Mr. Pitt took himself. He named himself lord privy seal and Earl of Chatham. Verging now upon sixty, and broken by a life of almost incessant torture, it is probable that Pitt felt himself unequal to the stormy discussions of the commons, and coveted peace. If this was his motive, he chose an unfortunate moment: he was thought by the nation to be then seizing the helm, prepared to act and to command: those who saw him shrinking from his own demonstration, and abandoning his post, could not constrain their disappointment or forbear their censure. “To withdraw,” says Lord Chesterfield, “in the fulness of his power, and in the utmost gratification of his

* Speech on American Taxation. The last sentence alludes to the appointment of Lord North and George Cooke as joint paymasters of the forces.

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ambition, from the house of commons, and to go into that hospital of incurables, the house of lords, is a measure so unaccountable, that nothing but proof positive could have made me believe it : but true it is—he is now only Earl of Chatham, and no longer Mr. Pitt in any respect whatever. Such an event, I believe, was never read or heard of.”* These were the sentiments of the public. The city of London, where he had so long been worshipped, refused an address upon his appointment, the press teemed with invectives, and the people, who thought themselves deserted, followed him with maledictions.

All this a man of Pitt’s high resolution and undaunted character could have borne with contempt, but it was not long before he felt that the public voice was right ;† that he had been deceived by the courtiers, had lent his influence, and sacrificed his popularity in forming a government in which he was to be a cipher. When he had executed his plan, he had not an inch of ground to stand upon. When he had accomplished his scheme of administration he was no longer minister.‡

* Chesterfield’s Letters to his Son.

his after language, in alluding to this time.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi.,

† “I own I was credulous, I was duped, I was deceived,” was

col. 842.

‡ Burke.

The commencement of the career of this administration was by no means auspicious. The failure of the harvest had occasioned a scarcity of corn which amounted to famine : riots, pillage, and bloodshed were the natural consequences ; and the sufferers clamoured for protection and relief. Urged by the extreme necessity, the ministry laid an embargo upon the exportation of grain, and sent messengers to the different ports to enforce obedience to the proclamation. This measure was highly popular, not a voice was raised against it : but upon the meeting of parliament the opposition urged, that although excused by the imminent necessity, the act was unconstitutional and illegal, and required an act of indemnity, to shield the authors from its consequences. Ministers, on the contrary, urged that in such cases of absolute necessity the constitution recognised a right in the sovereign to suspend the operation of an act of parliament ; and although they introduced an act for the protection of the inferior agents, they refused to include themselves. It must have sounded strange to hear Whigs who had proved throughout their lives their affection for liberty, and their hatred of oppression, arguing in a British house of commons in favour of a dispensing power. Yet, it is said, that Lord Camden was one of these. As we derive our knowledge of the de-

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 A. D. 1765 **unable to tell the precise line of argument adopted,**
 to 1767. **or the exact extent of the proposition contended for.**

The bare canvassing of such a proposition, in such an age, should be a moral lesson to their posterity. The example of wise and good men betrayed into egregious error by party pride which disdains to own itself wrong, or by the popular voice which cries that that cannot be illegal which is in itself so excellent, must teach us habitual caution in the formation of our opinions, and moderation in pressing them upon others.

Lord Chatham's health was now so entirely broken that he was unable to take any part whatever in ministerial affairs, and remained at Bath, at Hampstead, or at Hayes, apparently unconscious of his importance in the state. When his power was no longer felt, his influence ceased ; and it was remarked that, although

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi. — A tract, called a speech, on behalf of the constitution against the suspending and dispensing prerogative, written by Mr. Macintosh, assisted by Lord Temple and Lord Lyttelton, is the usual authority for this debate. But in a letter from Mr. Henry Flood to Lord Charlemont, cited in Thackeray's "Life of Lord Chatham," it is said that Lord Chatham kept clear of this doctrine, calling it an act of power justified by necessity ; and on hearing the debate, desired the bill to be made as strong as possible, to be extended to the advisers, and to be made declaratory as well as indemnifying.

constantly attacked in the course of debate, by the opposition, he was never defended by his colleagues.*

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The ministry soon became divided into as many parties as there were men in it, each complaining of the others. Charles Townshend was at open war with all; Conway was angry; Lord Shelburne out of humour, and the Duke of Grafton by no means pleased. While the bond of unity was thus relaxed, each member of the cabinet thought himself at liberty to pursue his own policy. Charles Townshend availed himself of this independence, and by a single act, the effect of his sensibility and versatile character, entailed disasters upon his country, which even the continual exercise of his own brilliant genius could not have compensated.

George Grenville could not forgive the Americans for thwarting his favourite scheme of revenue, and displacing his ministry. He lost no opportunity of declaiming against their ingratitude, and stigmatizing the ministers who had conceded their demands. Upon one occasion, in the middle of his harangue, he turned to the ministers: "You are cowards," he said. "You are afraid of the Americans; you dare not tax America." He repeated the taunt, and it had its intended effect. The fiery temper of Townshend

* Letter from Lord Charlemont. Life of the Earl of Chatham, vol. ii., p. 109.

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was kindled. "Fear!" he said, "Fear! Cowards! Dare not tax America! I dare tax America."

Grenville stood silent for a moment, and then said, "Dare you tax America? I wish to God I could see it." Townshend replied, "I will, I will."*

This declaration, once made, was not allowed to be evaded or withdrawn. Grenville was incessantly reminding him of his pledge; the whole body of courtiers drove him forward. They always talked as if the king stood in a sort of humiliated state, until something of the kind should be done.† Burke, in sketching the character of Townshend, has truly said, that, to please universally was the object of his life. The house of commons had approved the project of the Stamp act. Townshend ardently supported it. The house of commons had changed their opinion of that measure; and Townshend voted, and had not illness prevented him, would have spoken for its repeal. The opinion that America should be taxed began again to prevail, and Townshend again conformed. He boasted that he knew how to raise a revenue from the Americans without giving them offence; and assuming that, in Lord Chatham's distinction between legislation and taxation, the former included commer-

* Pitkin's History of the United States, from the MS. papers of Dr. Wm. S. Johnson, then in England, as agent for Connecticut.

† Burke.

cial restrictions and import dues, he introduced a series of resolutions, imposing duties upon several articles of import to the British colonies in America. The bill which was framed upon these resolutions passed both houses of the legislature in silence.* The Earl of Chatham was ill in bed.

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The spirit which produced this bill was occasioned by the recent conduct of the assemblies of Massachusetts and New York, in refusing obedience to the requisitions of the Mutiny act. The Americans had now obtained some knowledge of their strength, and were rather disposed to abuse it. Their captious opposition had alienated the sympathies of many of their friends, and enabled their enemies to recommence their system of unjust taxation. Two other bills accompanied that imposing the duties. One created a board of customs in the colonies; the second restricted the legislature of New York from passing any bill until the provisions of the Mutiny act had been complied with.

There can be no doubt that these measures were highly esteemed by the king. Townshend was now in favour at court; his lady was created a peeress, and he himself was about to seize upon the treasury.

* There was, however, great contention upon other parts of the budget; the proposed land tax of four shillings in the pound, was not only opposed, but was, by a majority against ministers, reduced to three shillings.

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The result of the intrigues now in progress would probably have been a cabinet, in which the king's friends would have been again supreme; but the immediate design was frustrated by the death of Townshend, who was carried off by a putrid fever, in the prime of his manhood, when the object of his ambition was just within his grasp. The difference between the reputation and the fame of this highly-gifted man is singular. His contemporaries ranked him as an orator with Pitt: in the house of commons he was far more popular than the great commoner; yet posterity scarcely recognises his name; and hundreds who revere the Earl of Chatham as one of the demigods of history, are ignorant that Charles Townshend existed.

When Pitt and Townshend were withdrawn, the ministry, which had been from its formation feeble, became contemptible. Before the death of Townshend the necessity for some change had been apparent, and the king had sent for Lord Chatham to advise with him upon the subject. That nobleman, however, returned a verbal answer, excusing himself on account of his illness. Arrangements were now made without consulting him; and the administration which has been so improperly called the Chatham administration—improperly, since the Earl of Chatham was neither ostensibly nor really at its head—was no more.

The only important measure proposed by this ministry, was the revival of the scheme of taxing America ; a scheme which Pitt had denounced in the house of commons, with all his characteristic vehemence ; but which the Tories of this administration, taking advantage of a season of bodily and apparently mental incapacity,* found means to send forth to the world, stamped with the authority of his name.

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* Lord Chesterfield attributes the Earl of Chatham's inactivity to the effects of the injudicious treatment of his physician, who had prevented a threatened attack of gout by dispersing the humour throughout his body.

This experiment caused a severe fit of illness, which chiefly affected the nerves. The inaction or error of a man thus afflicted cannot fairly be made the subject of criticism.

CHAPTER V.

Supremacy of the Tory party—The Grafton administration—Biographical anecdotes of Lord North—Of Charles Jenkinson—A new parliament—State of the elections—Imprisonment of Wilkes—Riots—Divisions of the Whigs—The Middlesex election, and proceedings upon it—Excitement of the people at the decision of the commons.

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THE Duke of Grafton retained his office as first lord of the treasury ; and the new administration was known by his name. General Conway and Lord Northington had long been anxious to rejoin their old allies, the Rockingham Whigs. Lord Gower, as president of the council, and Lord Weymouth, as secretary of state, supplied their places. Lord North became chancellor of the exchequer ; Mr. Thomas Townshend succeeded him as paymaster ; and Mr. Jenkinson was made a lord of the treasury. Earl

Camden was not immediately removed from the chancellorship, and Chatham nominally retained the privy seal; the latter was probably unconscious of being a minister, since, so great was his mental imbecility, that the trifling duties of his office were transacted by a temporary commission. Mr. De Grey, afterwards Lord Walsingham, was attorney-general, and Mr. Dunning solicitor-general.

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Thus easily did the heterogeneous production of Lord Chatham resolve itself into a regular Tory administration; and thus did the Tories become again, ostensibly—as they had, since the dismissal of Lord Rockingham, been effectively—the governing faction.

Among the members of the new cabinet appear two names, those of Lord North and Mr. Jenkinson, which will occur too frequently in after scenes to be introduced without some particular notice.

Frederick Lord North, eldest son of the Earl of Guildford, was born of a stock fruitful in the production of men of second-rate talent. He received the ordinary education of the aristocracy, at Eton, and Trinity College, Oxford; and, it is said, made more than the ordinary use of the advantages he enjoyed.*

* His classical knowledge, upon one occasion, procured him a rare triumph, even over Burke. The latter, in introducing his scheme of economical reform, used the Latin proverb “magnum vectigal est parsimonia;” pronouncing, however, the second word as vectigal. Lord North, in a low tone, remarked the error; but Burke, with admir-

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From Oxford he, of course, set forth to visit the continental courts, and to acquire that knowledge of Germany which, in the reign of George II., every courtier deemed indispensable. At Leipsic he studied the Germanic constitution, under Mascow, a professor famous in his own generation, and forgotten in ours. The young nobleman also applied himself diligently to the study of diplomacy, and having thus possessed himself of the usual qualifications of a candidate for office, returned to England in 1754, and was elected by his father to represent the family borough of Banbury. At the latter end of the Pitt administration he received, as the reward of his ability or his obedience, a seat at the treasury board, and retained this appointment during the Bute administration. George Grenville found and retained him in office, putting him forward in the motions against Wilkes, and valuing him as an unhesitating supporter of the right to tax America. Upon the influx of the Rockingham party, North was ejected with his colleagues; but not before he had acquired the reputation of being a very useful member of the party to which he had attached himself. When Lord Chatham

able presence of mind, turning to the interrupter, said, "The noble Lord hints that I have erred in the quantity of a principal word in my quotation. I rejoice at it.

It gives me an opportunity of repeating the inestimable adage, 'magnum vect-I-gal est parsimonia.'"—*Prior's Life of Burke*.

composed his medley ministry he was yoked with a colleague with whom he had neither personal or political communion, as joint paymaster of the forces; in the Tory ministry which now succeeded he was chancellor of the exchequer, and a lord of the treasury.

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In private life Lord North was universally esteemed. Always amiable and urbane, with a perpetual goodhumour which it appeared impossible to ruffle; witty without acrimony, abounding in scholastic and general knowledge; he was inestimable as a companion, and valuable as a subordinate minister: but destitute of vigilance, easily moved from his own course by the suggestions of others; and, incapable of severity, he was not calculated to rule in moments of danger. His speeches were in accordance with his character; light, sparkling, witty, always clever, sometimes well arranged and perspicuous, but never eloquent. The candour and known disinterestedness of the man was of great service to the orator; his own conviction was so evident that it spread among his hearers, and his audience listened with interest to his professions because they knew them to be truths. The character of his intellect affords no subject for philosophical speculation; it was open to all, seen in every act—a shining superficies.

Charles Jenkinson, afterwards Earl of Liverpool, was, throughout life, the object of the most acrimo-

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nious hostility from the Whigs. If we copy the portraits of the party writers of his day, we must draw him as a mere court minion, who had ability only to flatter and to fawn; whose honours were the reward of disgraceful services, and whose ignoble descent disgraced the peerage to which he was raised. Such, however, is not the language of truth. Charles Jenkinson was born in 1727, the eldest son of Colonel Jenkinson, who was a younger son of Sir Robert Jenkinson, the first baronet of a family long and honourably known in Oxfordshire. Charles received the rudiments of education at the Grammar-school of Burford, and removed thence to the Charterhouse, where he was placed on the foundation. From that excellent school he proceeded to Oxford, and graduated at University College.

Thus qualified, he sought the metropolis with the intention of devoting himself to literature. Jenkinson was at this time a Whig; he aided in the establishment of the Monthly Review, wrote largely in its pages, joined in the cry for the establishment of a national and constitutional force independent of a standing army, and published a dissertation upon the subject, abounding with the sentiments of Whiggism. When this pamphlet was afterwards quoted against him, in the house of peers, he acknowledged it as the offspring of his extreme youth, and the repository of its errors.

This production evinced considerable talent, and met with some success; but probably not sufficient to induce the author to continue in the service of the party he had first espoused. He now produced his "Discourse on the Conduct of the Government of Great Britain, with respect to neutral Nations, during the present War;" a performance which was only discovered to be able when its author was known to be powerful: then it was translated into all the languages of Europe.

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We soon afterwards find Jenkinson had made the discovery that, of the two parties, the Tories are by far the more grateful to their supporters. An obstinate election contest was raging in Oxfordshire, where Sir Edward Turner, favoured by the university and the court, was combating the Whigs. Jenkinson joined the Tory candidate, and was found so useful in writing satirical songs and electioneering pasquinades against the Whigs, and perhaps also from his connexions in the county, that he secured Sir Edward's future favour and patronage.

The Earl of Bute was now in the plenitude of his power, and to him, as to the high priest of fortune, Jenkinson was presented by his patron. The minister listened to the recommendation, and appointed him to a subordinate office. His own diligence and the interest of the member for Oxfordshire, rather than the Earl of Bute's favour, obtained his gradual

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promotion, and he was at length appointed the earl's private secretary. Being thus admitted behind the scenes, and initiated into all the mysteries of court government, his rise could no longer be impeded. In 1761 he was appointed under secretary of state, and was returned for Sir James Lowther's borough of Cockermouth. When Lord Bute retired into the country, a medium of communication between him and the king became necessary. Jenkinson was now frequently at St. James's, and so well did he ingratiate himself there that he was immediately ranked in a high station among the king's friends. The lucrative situation of treasurer of the ordnance, and afterwards the more important office of joint secretary of the treasury, rewarded his assiduity, during the supremacy of Lord Bute and the administration of George Grenville. The Rockingham government, which declared war against favourites, dismissed Jenkinson from all his places; but he was recompensed by the princess dowager, who appointed him to a post in her household.

Jenkinson was now looked upon as the pivot of every court intrigue, the confidential agent of the king, the princess dowager, and the Earl of Bute; the depositary of all their secrets, and the worker of all their schemes. When Toryism began to predominate in the Chatham administration, which was

within a very few weeks after its settlement, Jenkinson was restored to office. In 1766 he was made a lord of the admiralty, and now, under the Grafton administration, he became a lord of the treasury.

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Mr. Jenkinson, although he possessed no shining talent, had much solid ability, and official information. He was not an orator, but he was a shrewd and sensible speaker; he was eminently conversant with international law, and was profoundly versed in the principles and details of trade; he was a most efficient minister in a subordinate office; he was not qualified to lead and command a party.

Upon the settlement of the Grafton administration, the parties appeared exhausted by incessant contest, and by the continual changes which their struggles had produced. The remainder of the session of 1767-8 passed with no other incident of interest than a debate, in which the Whigs accused the ministers of taking advantage of the technicalities of the law for electioneering purposes, and enforcing the odious law maxim, "Nullum tempus occurrit regi," to take from the Whig Duke of Portland, certain possessions which he held under a grant from William III., and to bestow them upon the Tory, Sir James Lowther. This was an attempt so dangerous to the security of private property, and so far beyond the ordinary bounds of party warfare, that it met with very general execration. In the house of commons

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 V:
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At the end of the session this parliament had sat its septennial period, and the nation was awakened to the excitement of a general election. [The state of the representation was at this time such, that no Tory minister could want a majority in parliament, unless sufficient excitement prevailed to overcome the ordinary influence of the landholders. Very many of the boroughs, once the property of the Whigs, had now been bought up by the treasury, and were at the disposal of every successive minister. Many others had been bought up by jobbers upon speculation,* and were let to the highest bidders; generally those who could reckon upon recovering their purchase-money from the national coffers. The corruption of the Whigs, although sufficiently reprehensible, was carried on for a party, and, as at least the corrupters considered, for a patriotic object: the borough representation was now a mere money speculation, undisguised traffic, by which men were returned to parliament to increase the gains of a capitalist; and the majority in favour of Whig or Tory principles might depend upon whether Whigs or Tories were the more ready to satisfy the demands of

* Annual Register for 1768, p. 78.

a Jew jobber. The terms for seats in the new parliament were very high. Chesterfield offered 2500*l.* for one for his son, but he was informed that all that were in the market had been secured by the rich East and West Indians, who had obtained them at the rates of three, four, and five thousand pounds.* Men who have passed their lives in an atmosphere of despotism, and have been themselves the despots, seldom retain much affection for civil equality or popular rights. From the composition of this parliament we do not expect to find the majority very zealous to push the principles of Whiggism.]

The great event of the day was, however, the sudden return of Wilkes and his election for Middlesex. The Duke of Grafton, the present premier, although still a young man, had passed through several shades of politics. During the struggle upon the subject of general warrants he had strenuously supported Wilkes, and he had, since that time, repeated his assurances of protection and friendship. When placed by Lord Chatham at the head of the treasury he had, through his own brother, conveyed a similar message to the impatient democrat, who, inflated with hope, returned to England to receive his pardon. He found, however, upon his arrival, that nothing was intended in his favour. He re-

* Chesterfield's Letters.

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vengeed himself by writing and publishing a severe letter to the Duke of Grafton, taxing him with faithlessness and prevarication ; and he returned in bitter disappointment to his exile and his poverty.

Upon the dissolution, which took place on the 12th of March, 1768, he returned to England, and immediately offered himself a candidate for the city of London. Notwithstanding the philippic he had published against the minister, the duke retorted no acrimony, no writ was issued against the outlaw candidate, and he was allowed to appear upon the hustings, and conduct his canvass with impunity. He was defeated : but with undiminished confidence he declared that the suddenness of his arrival had alone prevented his success, and that he would appear as a candidate for the county. His opponents were George Cooke and Sir William Proctor, but at the end of the first day's poll, Wilkes was so immensely above him, that Sir William resigned the contest. Wilkes now surrendered himself to receive judgment, and obtained the reversal of his outlawry, which was pronounced informal. Twenty-two month's imprisonment, fines to the amount of 1000*l.*, and securities for his future behaviour were the terms of the judgment for publishing the *North Briton* and the "Essay on Woman ;" and Wilkes was immediately conveyed to the King's Bench.

The imprisonment of their idol inflamed the po-

pulace to frenzy; he was rescued from the custody of the marshal as he proceeded to the prison. After he had surrendered himself, crowds of people daily surrounded the prison demanding his release, and a still greater number assembled on the day for which the new parliament was formally summoned, supposing that the object of their anxiety would then go to take his seat. Against the multitude thus assembled, the military were sent; a conflict ensued, and many of the people were killed and wounded. Among the slain, was an innocent lad named Allen, who was shot in his father's house. The soldiery mistook him for a rioter whom they were pursuing, and who had taken refuge there. The coroner's jury pronounced the soldiers guilty of murder: the king and his ministers thanked them for their conduct.* This unhappy affair did not conduce to remove the prejudices of the people against a Tory cabinet.

In October, Lord Chatham was sufficiently recovered to external affairs to observe the policy pursued by his colleagues, and to send in his resignation.

On the 8th of November, parliament met for the

* When Mr. Burke afterwards attempted to bring this affair before parliament, he obtained only thirty-nine votes against two hundred and forty-five.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 608.

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despatch of business.* In the discussions which took place upon the address, there appeared to be two distinct bodies of opposition ; the Rockingham party of Whigs, headed by Edmund Burke, who since the loss of Pitt and Townshend was without a rival as the orator of the house ; and the Grenville party. George Grenville retaining many of the ideas he had acquired in his contact with Toryism, had nevertheless receded from that party. His reconciliation with Earl Temple had caused a great change in the political conduct of each of the brothers, and the Grenville party was now composed of individuals of varied creeds, ranging from discontented Tories to republican Whigs. All who were eager to oppose, but unwilling to submit to the strict discipline of the Rockingham party, joined the standard of the Grenvilles. These two bodies only agreed in hostility to the ministry ; on all other points, as the pamphlet war between their leaders denoted, they were hostile.†

The state of America was necessarily the first object of importance which engaged the attention of

* It had sat a few days in May, but merely for the purpose of continuing the temporary act for prohibiting the exportation of corn.

— *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 465.

† See Grenville's pamphlet "On the State of the Nation," and Burke's "Observations" on that pamphlet.

the houses. The ministry proposed a series of resolutions, declaring the right of taxation, noticing the violent resistance which had been offered to the law, and resolving that military force was necessary to its protection. In the lords, these resolutions were enforced by Lord Hillsborough and the Duke of Grafton, and feebly opposed by Lords Temple and Shelburne.* In the commons, a debate of considerable importance ensued. Burke and Grenville proved that one of the resolutions was contrary to the evidence before the house. The fact could not be denied, and the ministerial speakers were dumb. But their followers now came to their aid—drowned the laughter of the opposition in cries of question, and, upon a division, carried the resolutions, hastily amended, by a large majority.

A topic of much less importance, but of far greater popular interest was now furnished by Wilkes. The Duke of Grafton had promised that person, that if he would refrain from agitation until the period of his imprisonment had expired, he should then be allowed to take his seat without opposition.† This was not what the patriot desired; he was well aware of the importance of keeping himself in the public view, and persisted in forwarding a petition to the

* Hardwicke papers. Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 476.

† Almon's Life and Correspondence of Wilkes.

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house, recapitulating his persecutions, charging the chief justice with partiality, and the under secretary with suborning evidence against him, and demanding the interference of the commons. After the presentation of this petition, the duke kept no further terms with his former friend. He was called upon to prove some of the allegations of his petition, and the house voted all his charges either false or frivolous. He was then expelled.*

The resolutions upon Wilkes's petition passed with little opposition from the Whigs, who only proposed and obtained the omission of some opprobrious epithets, which they originally contained; but the motion for his expulsion called forth a strong resistance. Burke, Beckford, and even Grenville, names which represented every modification of Whiggism, resisted the measure. The speech of Mr. Grenville was afterwards published, and is one of the most moderate and argumentative orations of the time: it had little effect upon the ministerial majority, who carried their motion by two hundred and nineteen to one hundred and thirty-seven.

The imprudence of this violent and unwarrantable measure was immediately evident, the people's excitement in his favour became enthusiasm; it pervaded all ranks, and without the parliamentary circle

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 544.

of ministerial influence, there was scarcely an individual who did not think that a blow had been aimed at the constitution. Men asked each other whether, since ministers had undertaken to say whom they should not choose, the next step might not be to say whom they should elect as their representatives. The ignorant and the thoughtless regarded the ejected member as a patriot, whose presence was dreaded by a tyrannical ministry, and a venal parliament; the Whigs saw in the persecution of a mere demagogue adventurer, a precedent which might prove fatal to better men. The electors of Middlesex immediately re-elected him; and the day after the election, the house of commons resolved that he was incapable of being elected a member to sit in that parliament. In the debate upon this motion, Mr. James Townshend intimated that the proposed resolution would call forth petitions to the throne for a dissolution of parliament, an intimation which produced Lord North, fulminating with wrath, and denouncing terrible threats against any one who should sign such a petition. The house, however, was not fallen so low as to be threatened into silence, and his lordship found it prudent to explain his observations.*

* His explanation was that resent such an affront on those
 "most probably parliament would who should sign such a petition."

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The necessity of a demonstration in their favour out of doors was now seen by the ministers. The Tories in London called a meeting, to vote a loyal address to the king, but the adherents of Wilkes assembled in such numbers at the place appointed, that they drove their opponents from the room, and reversed the character of the proceedings. A Tory address was, however, at length prepared, but those who undertook to convey it to St. James's, bore also into the palace the popular protest marked upon their persons. A hearse, bearing an effigy of the murdered Allen preceded them, and drew up before the courtyard of the palace : those few of the addressers who reached the palace, were beaten, wounded, and covered with the peltings of the populace. Such was the spectacle of Tory popularity presented to the king.

Mr. Dingley, the principal promoter of the address, undertook to contest the county, but the

His lordship appears to have held at a low estimate the liberty of an Englishman, if he thought it could be taken away by a house of commons, for petitioning the king to exercise a branch of his prerogative.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 578. Here is an example of Toryism in its second generation. Clarendon or Clifford would have

thought the king the proper party to punish a presumptuous petitioner ; Toryism under the house of Hanover, was jealous of no power which declared against the people. Privilege, in the hands of a Tory house of commons, was as useful as prerogative, and the principle, which preferred prerogative was gone. See *ante*, vol. ii.

violence of the mob was so great, that he was afraid to appear upon the hustings at the nomination, and Wilkes was re-elected without opposition. This election was also declared void and another writ issued.

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Such a contest as this, it was highly important to the minister to terminate. He looked around upon his supporters for one who, possessing the requisite qualities of personal courage, and contempt of public opinion, would exert both to the utmost in his service. Such a person was found in Colonel Henry Lawes Luttrell, a young gentleman of good family but of no fortune or immediate interest in the county; so great was the risk he was thought to dare, that as soon as he had vacated his seat, and declared himself a candidate, policies were opened upon his life at several of the insurance offices in the city.

These expectations were disappointed: the apprehension of affording a triumph to the Tories made the friends of Mr. Wilkes preserve strict order in all their proceedings. At the close of the poll it appeared that the whole court and Tory interest in the county could muster no more than two hundred and ninety-six votes: Wilkes numbered eleven hundred and forty-three.

When the return was laid before the house, Wilkes's election was immediately declared void;

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and upon the following day the house resolved that Colonel Luttrell ought to have been returned. Fourteen days were allowed for petitions against this decision, and one was accordingly presented and heard. The resolution was, of course, confirmed, and the clerk of the crown was ordered to amend the return by rasing out the name of Mr. Wilkes, and inserting that of Colonel Luttrell.

No public measure, since the accession of the house of Hanover, had excited so general an alarm as these resolutions. They were opposed in the house of commons as loudly as they were denounced by the people. When the attorney-general spun his forensic sophistries, cited precedents of expulsion, and argued that because aliens, minors, and clergymen were excluded from that house, the same power which could exclude a rank could exclude an individual, he was answered by Mr. Grenville, who, with an equal knowledge of election law, canvassed his precedents, showed that they were either irrelevant or opposed to the ministerial doctrine, and ridiculed the assertion, that the same power which could legally exclude a class could exclude an individual, as a position worthy only of a man who could not distinguish between a legislator and a tyrant. When Lord North appealed to the passions of his audience, railed against Wilkes, enumerated the variety of troubles he had given the ministry, and

dwelt upon the expediency of the measure proposed, he was met by Burke, who drew, on the other side, a moving picture of the state of the nation, and of the terrible consequences to be dreaded from the conduct of the ministry. He denied that this was a contest between the house of commons and the freeholders of Middlesex—it was a contest between that house and the voters of England, whose franchises the house of commons had invaded. He accused the ministers as libellers of the people, with charging them in their addresses with crimes they had themselves forced them into, and as the sowers of discord between the king and his subjects.*]

On the 9th of May the king, with many encomiums upon the conduct of his parliament, put an end to the session.

The decision of the house of commons was heard with rage and indignation. A Tory ministry and a Tory house of commons, it was said, had at last met; they were worthily pursuing their old party predilections; they had already evinced their contempt for the constitution by destroying the right of representation, and their hatred of the people by a military massacre.

* Parl. Hist. vol. xvi., col. 590. It must not be forgotten that this work was written by or under the immediate superintendence of Edmund Burke.
—The best account of the argument on each side of this question is the summary contained in the Annual Register for 1769, p. 68*.

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The indignation of the people and their leaders was not greater than their boldness. Wilkes and his party promoted the circulation and signature of the most outrageous attacks upon the ministry, the parliament, and the sovereign; which, under the name of petitions, carried the most poignant invective even to the throne. The Middlesex petitioners reviewed the whole series of political transactions of the reign, and concluded that they were a tissue of unjust, tyrannical, and cruel acts, flowing from the legislative, executive, and judicative estates. They prayed, therefore, that he would banish for ever from his favour, trust, and confidence, his evil and pernicious counsellors. The tenour of the London petition was the same.

Westminster prayed more wisely for a dissolution of parliament; and fifteen counties and a great number of populous cities and towns immediately followed the example. An effort was made to obtain addresses of an opposite character. Scotland sent them readily; the universities maintained their Tory character, and complied; but, of all the counties of England, in Essex, Kent, Surrey, and Salop only could such a demonstration be risked; the cities of Bristol and Coventry, and the single town of Liverpool, completed the list of admirers of the ministry.

Another class of petitions, expressed in language firm but temperate, and forcible but decorous, pro-

ceeded from the Whigs ; men who were not hurried away by their passions to exclaim against the persecutors of Wilkes, but who saw and deplored the ravages which this ministry had already made in the constitution. Of these, one from Buckinghamshire, written by Mr. Burke, and another from Yorkshire, by Sir George Saville, excited general attention and approbation.

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CHAPTER VI.

Letters of Junius—Their character and influence—Summary of the claims of the different writers named as the author of these letters.

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THIS was a time, when all constitutional remedy was suspended, and the house of commons had become an instrument of tyranny, to tax to the utmost the power of the press—an engine whose power arises from its necessity, and increases with its pressure; which can, at such a crisis as this, alone supply the want of a representative body, and by imbuing multitudes with the same definite purpose, enable them to use the power they had been accustomed to delegate. The age was by no means destitute of men qualified for the occasion. Judge Blackstone, in his pamphlet, called “The Answer to the Question stated;” and Dr. Johnson, in another, called “False

Alarm," exerted their great talents upon the Tory side ; Wilkes and Sir William Meredith were only individuals of a multitude which gave utterance to the sentiments of the nation. But these writers, able as they were, shrunk into insignificance beside a rival who, upon his appearance, at once claimed and monopolized the public attention.

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Junius commenced that series of letters which has inflicted a damning immortality upon every member of this government, in January, 1769. He was a practised political writer, well known to the public under various signatures, and never unsuccessful in his appeals. He was a Whig in party and in principle, a defender not a servile encomiast of the Rockingham party, differing from them upon many occasions, sometimes preceding, at others falling short of them in liberality of sentiment, but always halting far short of those who urged forward their principle without regard to aristocratic interests or personal expediency.*

The powers of this writer as they are displayed in these letters, stand unrivalled in any age or language.

* Junius, in parliament, would have voted for Lord Rockingham's Declaratory act (Letter 63) ; and he would have opposed the disfranchisement of nomination boroughs (Letter to the supporters of the Bill of Rights). But on

the other hand he denounced the game laws as incompatible with legal liberty (Letter 63) ; and recorded his dissent from Lord Camden's doctrine of a suspending prerogative (Letter 59).

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Bolingbroke could declaim in majestic and harmonious language, allure his readers by a display of disinterested and patriotic sentiment, and animate them against his enemies by the eloquence of his accusation; the elegant Addison could please, could ridicule, could convince; Swift, was an inimitable lampooner, unhesitating in his assertions, and strong in abuse; but Junius surpassed all these. He addressed himself to the powerful passions of our nature, captivated attention by rancorous abuse, sarcastic invective, and ferocious personalities; yet disguised these so well by the purity of his language and the grace of his style, that while we relish the pungency we do not taste the grossness. He offers us an excitement to our passions, but the goblet appears so pure that we pour from it a libation to virtue; he fences with a rapier of the highest temper and polish: while we admire his amazing dexterity we do not perceive that the blade is poisoned—that the same weapon, urged by an infant's hand, would inflict a deadly wound.

The aim of Junius was not calm conviction, it was tumultuous excitement; conviction might pen pamphlets, but would scarcely withdraw one vote from the well-pensioned majority of the minister; excitement would carry terror into the cabinet and the closet, and constrain, by fear, men who were deaf to virtue. Thus, the weakest invention which his

readers believed, and all things are credible to an enraged people, was readily caught up by Junius, and embalmed in the amber of his diction. He revived the long exploded accusation against Lord Mansfield, that he had drunk the pretender's health upon his knees. He favoured the popular belief that the Duke of Bedford and Earl Bute had been bribed by France to conclude the peace of Paris;* and even condescended to remark the faded beauty of the Duke of Grafton's mistress. He caught the topics and scandal of the day, and wrought upon them until those who had seen and received them in their native coarseness were surprised and delighted to find truths in which they thought they had an interest presented in such an elegant and engaging garb.

It was thus that Junius excited attention. At this distance of time the keenness of his satire attracts thousands of readers who know nothing of the secret history of the period, and little of the characters he assails. If his style can charm such persons how must it have excited his contemporaries, who saw in every sentence a wound inflicted upon an enemy, and knew that the man they hated was at the moment

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* A belief which depended entirely upon the testimony of Dr. Musgrave, perhaps an honest, but certainly an imprudent and credulous man. This absurd story had been long since disproved by a public examination of Musgrave at the bar of the house of commons. — *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 763. But the mob still believed it.

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writhing under the infliction. The mystery of the authorship lent an additional shade of interest to the letters. Junius was exempt from the failings of humanity, he had no conduct upon which his satire could be retorted, no personal friendship which he *dared* not violate, no consistency to preserve beyond his letters ; cased in impenetrable armour, he mingled with the crowd, and pointed his unerring shafts in security ; the throne was not too high, the cottage not too low, for his visitations.

Such were the causes of Junius's popularity ; but he was not destitute of other excellences. He could reason clearly and strongly, and his letters contain many beautiful specimens of logical argument. He was possessed of profound political knowledge, and he was immediately and accurately informed of the secret transactions of the day.* Junius enjoyed every opportunity of becoming a perfect political writer, and he used them.

The effect of these letters may be read in the words of a man who was too accustomed to contemplate excellence in himself to overvalue it in others. " How comes this Junius to have broke through the cobwebs of the law, and to range uncontrolled, unpunished, through the land. The myrmidons of the court have been long and are still pursuing him in

* See his private letters to Woodfall *passim*.

vain. They will not spend their time upon me, or you, or you : no, they disdain such vermin, when the mighty boar of the forest, that has broke through all their toils is before them. But what will all their efforts avail ? No sooner has he wounded one than he lays another dead at his feet. For my part, when I saw his attack upon the king, I own my blood ran cold, I thought he had ventured too far, and that there was an end of his triumphs. Not that he had not asserted many truths. Yes, sir, there are in that composition many bold truths by which a wise prince might profit. It was the rancour and venom by which I was struck. In these respects the North Briton is as much inferior to him as in strength, wit, and judgment. But while I expected from this daring flight his final ruin and fall, behold him rising still higher, and coming down souse upon both houses of parliament. Yes, he did make you his quarry, and you still bleed from the wounds of his talons. You crouched and still crouch beneath his rage ; nor has he dreaded the terrors of your brow, sir ; he has attacked even you—he has—and I believe you have no reason to triumph in the encounter. In short, after carrying away our royal eagle in his pounces, and dashing him against a rock, he has laid you prostrate. King, lords, and commons, are but the sport of his fury. Were he a member of this house what might not be expected from his knowledge, his

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firmness, and integrity? He would be easily known by his contempt of all danger, by his penetration, by his vigour. Nothing would escape his vigilance and activity. Bad ministers could conceal nothing from his sagacity; nor could promises or threats induce him to conceal any thing from the public.”*

Such were the terms in which Burke spoke of the genius and the influence of Junius. He knew that, notwithstanding the rancour and venom which he condemned, the productions of that writer had infused a spirit of daring independence into the conductors of political periodicals that had never before been equalled. Alone Junius did this. At the commencement of his career this same Junius, before he had yet assumed the title under which he is become immortal, had furnished Woodfall with a report of one of Burke’s speeches in the house of commons. The report was covered with the usual disguise of a speech at a debating society; and as it is the earliest so it is the tamest of Burke’s reported speeches; yet Woodfall dared not publish it without several omissions and alterations. Two years later the same printer published, without hesitation, Junius’s “Letter to a King.” The people had now found a writer worthy of their support and they upheld him.

Lord North saw and deplored this consequence of

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1155.

the popularity and impunity of Junius. In answering Burke, he said, "Can any man recollect a period when the press groaned with such a variety of wicked and desperate libels? Such is their number that one would imagine there is not a single pen made, a single standish used, or a single scrap of paper bought, but in order to manufacture a libel. The first thing we lay our hands on in the morning is a libel, the last thing we lay out of our hands in the evening is a libel. Our eyes open upon libels. In short, libels, lampoons, and satires, constitute all the writing, printing, and reading of our time.

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"Why, therefore, should we wonder that the great boar of the wood, this mighty Junius, has broke through the toils and foiled the hunters? Though there may be at present no spear that will reach him; yet he may be, some time or other, caught. At any rate he will be exhausted with fruitless efforts; those tusks which he has been whetting to wound and gnaw the constitution will be worn out. Truth will at last prevail. When the feculence of bad humours has worked itself off, the leaven of Junius will produce no new fermentation; he will then be despised for the very falsehood and malice that now gain him readers; his pertness will no longer be mistaken for wit, nor his impudence for spirit. The North Briton, the most flagitious libel of its day, would have been equally secure with Junius had it been as powerfully

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supported. But the press had not then overflowed the land with its black gall, and poisoned the minds of the people. Political writers had some shame left, some reverence for the crown, some respect for the name of majesty, nor were there any members of parliament hardy enough to harangue in defence of libels.”*

It will be expected that, in a work like the present, some notice should be taken of the various hypotheses started as to the authorship of these letters. Previously to the appearance of the private letters from Junius to Mr. Woodfall, and the identification of Junius with letters under other titles, the persons who were chiefly suspected were Burke, Single-speech Hamilton, Mr. Rosenhagen, General Lee, Wilkes, Horne Tooke, Hugh Macauley Boyd, and Lord George Sackville.† Of these Wilkes and Horne Tooke could only be thought of by those who were ambitious of starting and defending paradoxes. General Lee’s claim depended upon a confession said to have been made to Mr. Rodney, and is disproved by the absence of the General from England at a

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1168. Collate the reports in Woodfall’s “Vox Senatus,” and in the “Gentleman’s Magazine.”

† There are several others named by Mr. Woodfall, in his

edition of Junius, and summarily disposed of by proof, that they were either dead or absent from England at some time when his father was in almost daily communication with Junius.

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time when frequent private notes were passing between Junius and Woodfall. Mr. Rosenhagen, a friend of Mr. Woodfall, and an occasional writer in the Public Advertiser, is said to have propagated a report that he was Junius, in order to induce Lord North to silence him with a pension. Hugh Macauley Boyd, “a broken gentleman without a guinea in his pocket,”* a great admirer and imitator of Junius, was thought by Mr. Almon to be Junius, because he blushed when charged with the authorship, and because Almon thought he could detect some resemblance between the handwriting of Boyd and that of Junius. Of these competitors Horne alone alone possessed a tithe of the ability requisite to constitute a Junius.

Gerard Hamilton, Lord George Sackville, and Burke, stand upon different ground; they were all men whom their contemporaries judged capable of writing these letters. The principal fact against Gerard Hamilton is, that he mentioned the substance of a letter of Junius in conversation, which he pretended to have just read in the Public Advertiser; but which, on reference to the paper, was found not to be there, an apology instead of it being offered for its postponement till the next day, when the letter

* So described by Almon in his biography of him. The sentiments and fortune of this youthful republican correspond but ill with the lofty and aristocratic Junius.

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thus previously adverted to by Hamilton actually made its appearance. This circumstance, however, is easily accounted for by the facts, that Hamilton was intimate with Woodfall, and that the latter was accustomed to communicate the letters of Junius to his friends before they were published.* In other respects we can find no identity between Junius and Hamilton. Junius was a virulent partisan, Hamilton was ever a moderate man, and never allied himself closely with either party; Junius was an ardent advocate for parliamentary reform (such as was then proposed by the Whigs), Hamilton was so opposed to any scheme of that nature that he declared he would rather suffer his right hand to be cut off than vote for it. Hamilton himself denied the authorship with disdain, as an imputation upon his good taste in composition. He doubtless had taste and ability, but not such as would assume the form of Junius.

The evidence against Lord George Sackville rests chiefly upon a private letter from Junius to Woodfall, in which he says, “That Swinney is a wretched but dangerous fool. He had the impudence to go to Lord G. Sackville, whom he had never spoken to,

* Mr. Woodfall appeared to point to this construction of the incident, when he stated that he knew that the opinion drawn from it, that Hamilton was Junius, was founded upon a misconception.—*Woodfall's Junius.*

and to ask him whether or no he was the author of Junius—take care of him.”*

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Upon subsequent inquiry it was found that Junius must have become possessed of this intelligence within a few hours after the circumstance occurred. Lord George Sackville's talents were well known and admitted, his political principles were closely in accordance with those avowed by Junius, and Sir William Draper expressed himself convinced that his lordship was the author. But, on the other hand, Junius's knowledge of Swinney's visit to Lord George was probably shared with many others; the information was as likely to come from Swinney as from his lordship, and the man who was impertinent enough to go and put the question, was probably a garrulous fellow, who proceeded directly to his club-house and told what he had done. Lord George Sackville once declared to a friend that, although he should be proved capable of writing as Junius had done, yet there were many passages in his letters he would be very sorry to have written; and in the caricature of the ministry, called, “a Grand Council upon the Affairs of Ireland,”† written by Junius, but not under that signature, Lord Townshend is represented as saying, “I believe the best thing I

* Private Letters, No. 5, Woodfall's Junius.

1767, before the letters signed Junius were commenced.

† This piece was written in

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can do is to go and consult with my Lord George Sackville. His character is known and respected in Ireland as much as it is here ; and I know he loves to be stationed in the rear as well as myself ;”* an equivocal compliment and a direct imputation of cowardice which it is not probable that any man would, without an object, fix upon himself.†

Burke remains. When Junius began to write in the Public Advertiser, even while he wrote under other titles, the voice of his contemporaries attributed his productions to Burke ; and Junius was con-

* Mr. Coventry, who has very elaborately supported Lord George Sackville’s claims to the authorship of Junius, finding this passage a serious obstacle, boldly denies that it was written by Junius, and starts the incomprehensible hypothesis that this caricature was drawn by the cabinet ministers themselves, to ridicule Lord Sackville as Malagrida. This letter is identified as coming from Junius, by a notice in the Public Advertiser of October 21, 1767. “ The Grand Council on the Affairs, &c. is come to hand, and shall have a place in our next ;” and immediately under, “ Our friend and correspondent C. will always find the utmost attention paid to his favours.” Mr. Woodfall, who has

printed this letter as a Junius, is not likely to be mistaken. It must be remembered also, that Cumberland, who published a panegyric upon Lord Sackville soon after his death, speaks of him as unusually deficient in classical acquirements, and as possessing neither the advantages of literature, brilliancy of wit, nor any superior pretensions to a fine taste in the elegant arts.—See this panegyric in Collins’s Peerage.—Could such a man have been Junius ?

† Lord George Sackville, when Lord George Germaine, was broken by a court-martial, for cowardice exhibited at the battle of Minden.

tinually assailed in the public papers as “The Hi-bernian Secretary,” “The lad whose face had been bathed in the Liffey,” “The dealer in the sublime and beautiful,” with many other similar epithets. Mrs. Burke once admitted that she believed her husband knew the author of the letters, but that he certainly did not write them; and Burke himself once indirectly admitted to Sir Joshua Reynolds, that he knew the writer of Junius’s letters; giving at the same moment an intimation that he wished nothing more to be said upon the subject. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Mr. Malone believed that Burke did not write these letters, but certainly polished and finished them for the public eye. Mr. Dyer, an intimate friend of the Burkes, and a commissary in the army, was the person whom Burke’s friends suspected of having furnished the foundation of the letters; and their suspicion was increased, or perhaps originated, by the conduct of Burke, who, at the death of Mr. Dyer, which happened in 1772, intruded into his lodgings, and hastily destroyed a quantity of papers, saying they were of great importance to him, but of none to any other person. Lord Mansfield, Sir William Blackstone, and Sir William Draper, thought that Burke was Junius; the last, upon Burke’s denial, turned his suspicions upon Lord George Sackville: we have no evidence that the other objects of his attack changed their opinion.

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As in the cases of Hamilton and Lord Sackville, a corroborative incident is brought forward against Burke. The readers of Woodfall's edition of Junius are aware that all the letters written by that author were known to Woodfall by a private mark, "C." By this mark many miscellaneous communications, under various signatures, are identified as proceeding from Junius, and among others the report of Burke's speech already alluded to. In his introduction to this report, Junius speaks of it as having been spoken by himself at a debating society, and the advocates of this hypothesis think that expression decisive upon the subject. This same speech, however, was reported much more correctly in the Political Register; and appears, probably for beauties which are lost in the report, to have been much admired at the time. Every member of the house of commons must have recognised it at once as Burke's speech; and it is highly improbable that, if he had reported it himself, he would state that the report came from the author. The legitimate inference from this circumstance appears to be only an uncertain probability that Junius was, at this time, a member of the house of commons.

On the other hand, Burke distinctly and spontaneously denied to many persons that he was the author of these letters. Burke was a decided opponent of George Grenville, condemned and repealed the Stamp act, and detested the idea of triennial parliaments. Junius was a persevering

encomiast of Grenville, an approver of the Stamp act,* and an advocate for triennial parliaments; points of difference might be multiplied, but these are sufficient to show that Burke could not have written these letters. Another circumstance, in itself conclusive against the claims of Burke's friends, is the action brought by Burke against Woodfall, in 1783, for a libel printed in the Public Advertiser. Considerable interest was made with Mr. Burke to induce him to drop this prosecution, but he was inexorable. A verdict of a hundred pounds was obtained and the amount received. Junius could not have acted thus. To any person who has no particular theory to establish, the mere perusal of Junius's private letters must be sufficient to convince him that they were never written by Burke; in these we see the temper of the writer, and it is not the temper of Burke.†

Since the publication of the private letters, and the identification of the miscellaneous letters, several other names have been mentioned. A plausible

* "If the pretensions of the colonies had not been abetted by something worse than a faction here, the Stamp act would have executed itself."—*Junius's Miscellaneous Letters*, No. xxxi.—Compare this with Burke's speech on American taxation. "Sir, the agents and distributors of falsehoods have, with their usual industry, circulated another lie of the

same nature with the former. It is this: That the disturbances arose from the account which had been received in America of the change of ministry."

† The arguments in favour of Burke will be found collected in Prior's *Life of Burke*, and stated in the two pamphlets that have been written in support of the identity of Burke and Junius.

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writer has undertaken to demonstrate that the Duke of Portland was Junius, and that the acrimony which inspired these letters was caused by the persecution he suffered at the hands of the ministry, under cover of the *nullum tempus* maxim. This advocate argues that the restoration of the duke's estate, which had been granted to Sir James Lowther, was the direct, if not the only cause of Junius's writing. He shows that, under the signature of "Mnemon," Junius energetically and perseveringly supported the cause of the duke: that upon this subject he was always early informed, always minutely correct; while upon others his information was frequently general, and sometimes erroneous: that in this defence he employs no less than seventeen signatures, and that the great grievance, however covertly introduced, is never absent from his mind. He shows also that the letters in which Junius defended the Duke of Portland correspond, in a remarkable manner, with the case published, under the duke's authority, by Almon, in 1768; and proceeds, after the manner of all his competitors, to force every ambiguous sentence in the letters into a declaration that the author was his hero. This practice is so universal with the discoverers of Junius, each is so keen in detecting and ridiculing the credulity of his opponents, so credulous and confident himself, that I know no study more instructive, as an illustration of the infirmity of human judgment, than a perusal of the mass of contro-

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versy upon the authorship of Junius's Letters. The advocate of the duke is not without his direct evidence. The duke was intimately connected with the Cavendish family, both by birth and marriage. A packet received by Woodfall, but recovered by Junius, was sealed with the Cavendish arms. One of the letters in Woodfall's possession is sealed with, what this theorist considers to have been, a ducal coronet,* others are antiques of which his grace's mother had a very fine collection. The handwriting of Junius and that of the duke are compared, and pronounced identical. In a memoir of the duke, his advocate finds it stated, that it was well known that no gentleman in England could write a better letter ; and again, that he joined with the Marquis of Rockingham in writing down two administrations ; for which purpose a joint-stock purse was collected and employed.

The anxiety which Junius showed to preserve his secrecy, and his protracted silence when the period of danger was past, are accounted for with some plausibility. The leases of the Marylebone estate would expire in 1794 ; the Cumberland property was already litigated. Had the duke been even suspected to be Junius previous to that year, could he have expected from George III. the renewal of the

* The impression is so imperfect, that when Mr. Woodfall submitted it to several of his friends in the Herald's College, none of them could determine to what rank it belonged.

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Marylebone estate, under any administration, or from the protection of either party? “Motives,” he told Sir William Draper, “very different from any apprehension of his resentment rendered it impossible he should ever know him.” It was important to the duke that the Scotch influence and the Tory power which had attacked his Cumberland estates should be overthrown; but absolute ruin would be the consequence of his detection as their assailant. Junius contended for a mighty stake—he thus secretly gave vent to his bitterness against men who were attacking his patrimony, yet whom he dared not openly provoke. The secret was never revealed, because the duke, in 1794, changed his party, to procure the renewal of the Marylebone estate. Thenceforward the letters of Junius must have been a fountain of bitterness to their author.

Such are the arguments put forth in support of a hypothesis which, like all others that have been advanced upon the same subject, obtained attention by the solemn air of confidence with which it was ushered in, was heard, and was forgotten.*

A second person pointed out, by a no less sanguine section of the examiners of the private letters, was Sir Philip Francis, whose identity with Junius is supported by an equal quantity of circumstantial evidence. The advocates of this candidate discover

* Letters to a Nobleman, proving a late Prime Minister to have been Junius.

that the chief object of the letters of Junius was to vilify the ministry for having discharged Mr. Francis from a situation in the war-office. They show that Junius, under other signatures, dragged before the public all the petty details of intrigues among the underlings of the war-office, dwelt upon them with an interest which none but a person intimately affected by them could have felt, and discovered a minute knowledge of the transactions of the place, which none but an officer of the establishment could have possessed. They remark that Junius, who is so very sparing of panegyric upon other occasions, lavishes it upon Mr. Francis and Mr. D'Oyly upon their quitting their situations; and that Junius himself appears to intimate that these letters were written by an injured man; since, under the signature of "Scotus," he tells Lord Barrington, "You have had some lessons which have made you more cautious than you used to be. You have reason to remember that modest humble merit will not always bear to be insulted by an upstart in office." The signature under which Junius wrote the letters to Lord Barrington was "*Veteran*;" and, in several of his private letters to Woodfall, he expressed his anxiety that *Veteran* should not be known to be Junius. If it can be proved that Sir Philip Francis wrote the letters signed "*Veteran*," all further argument from the expressions or peculiarities of the letters signed "*Junius*" is superfluous, as there can exist no

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contend that Sir Philip Francis was Junius, also remark that Junius never attacks Lord Holland, is silent concerning him in his public letters, and in his private communications to Woodfall acknowledges an interest in his honour. Lord Holland, when Mr. Henry Fox, had given Sir Philip Francis a little place in the secretary of state's office early in life ; Dr. Francis, Sir Philip's father, was Lord Holland's domestic chaplain, and the tutor of his son. It appears that Junius and Sir Philip Francis have each declared, the latter in his "Essay on the Regency," the former in the dedication to his letters, that they heard Lord Chatham's speech of the 11th December, 1770, and noted his expressions. A journey made by Sir Philip to the continent, during the period over which the letters of Junius extend, tallies exactly with a suspension of the correspondence between Junius and Woodfall ; Junius was very apprehensive of being watched by Garrick ; Garrick was acquainted with Sir Philip, and had he caught a glimpse of Junius could, under this supposition, have identified him. The styles of Junius and Sir Francis are declared, by the advocates of their identity, to be similar, and the handwriting to be of precisely the same general character.*

This circumstantial proof is very strong, but on the other hand, those who have some other

* Junius Identified.

theory to support, speak with great contempt of the advocates of Sir Philip. They urge that Sir Philip wrote to Sir Richard Phillips, stating that it was a silly malignant falsehood to attribute the authorship of the letters to him. They remark that the works which are avowedly those of Sir Philip have not a particle of the spirit of Junius in them. They notice that Junius was at first the violent assailant of Lord Chatham, and only gradually dropped his hostility, and became an admirer and panegyrist of that nobleman; but that Sir Philip, who had been brought forward in life by Lord Chatham's interest, was always his follower and encomiast; they remark that Welbore Ellis, who is never mentioned by Junius but in the most contemptuous manner, was a man to whom Sir Philip was indebted for great kindness; that Sir Philip was an Irishman, whereas it is now generally admitted that these letters were written by an Englishman, and that Junius "remembered the great Walpolean battles," and "saw the jesuitical books burnt at Paris"—events which happened before Sir Philip was born. By Sir Philip Francis's advocates it has been thought a fact in their favour, that Mr. Woodfall, the printer of the Public Advertiser, and Sir Philip, had been contemporaries and intimates at St. Paul's school. They say that Junius discovered an interest in the prosperity of his printer which he would not have felt had he known him merely as a printer.

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But the fact is also capable of being urged on the other side. Mr. Woodfall must have had some knowledge of his old schoolfellow, and when he was named as the author he must have had peculiar means of judging whether the report was correct ; he always absolutely denied it. Some years after, Mr. Woodfall, having been to a public dinner at which Sir Philip, then returned from India, was present, remarked to a friend, that he had just met his old schoolfellow, Sir Philip Francis. “Then,” answered his friend, “you met, at the same time, your old correspondent, Junius.”—“Certainly not,” was Mr. Woodfall’s reply. “To my absolute knowledge Sir Philip never wrote one line of those letters.”*

Upon an impartial review of the claims of each of these writers, it will, I think, appear that, although it is possible that one of them may have been Junius, no sufficient proof can be brought forward in behalf of either of them. The idea appears, in general, to have been suggested by some strong coincidence in a particular point. Struck by this single coincidence, some sanguine inquirer has, in each instance, become at once convinced. He has continued the investigation with a prejudice which nothing could shake, has wrested every ambiguous circumstance to his own side, given to every sentence a construction corrobo-

* This anecdote was communicated to me by the present Mr. Woodfall.

rative of his preconceived opinion ; and where he met with a difficulty which could be neither overlooked nor destroyed, has avoided it, by the ever ready excuse, that Junius wrote with a constantly sustained design of avoiding detection. With such advantages there is not a public man of the period who could not be supported, with some degree of plausibility, as the author of Junius's Letters.

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Very recently the inquiry has been renewed with increased spirit, by Sir David Brewster, whose acumen and discrimination will certainly preserve him from the inconsistencies into which all his predecessors have been betrayed, and who, if the materials exist, will probably determine the question. The candidate whose claims are at present preferred by Sir David, is Mr. Lachlan Maclean, secretary to the Earl of Shelburne. This gentleman, like every one of his contemporaries who was known to be a political writer, was suspected by his private friends to be Junius, and when he afterwards received a lucrative appointment in India, the newspapers of the day adopted and spread the report. His claims were noticed by Almon in the introduction to his edition of Junius, but without much respect, and the idea, which was never very generally entertained, soon declined, and was forgotten. Its recent revival was the result of accident ; Sir David Brewster, among the papers of his relative, Mr. Macpherson, found a number of

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letters addressed to that gentleman by Maclean, with whom Macpherson was in some way connected. Although written upon private or ordinary topics, the style was so peculiar, the epigrammatic diction which characterizes the writings of Junius was so marked, the phrases were in many instances so similar, and the general character of the handwriting so closely corresponded with the fac-similes published in Woodfall's edition of Junius, that Sir David was induced to make further inquiries. From the scattered notices which remain of so obscure a person, it appears that Maclean was the son of an Irish Presbyterian clergyman, descended from the Macleans of Coll, in the Hebrides. He first applied himself to the study of medicine, and served for some time as regimental surgeon in America. Upon his return he was introduced to Lord Shelburne by Colonel Barrè, and abandoned his profession, and became a political writer in London. The times were favourable for men of his class. The government was corrupt, and gave large premiums for talent; whilst the keenness of public contests, and the variety of administrations that succeeded each other with such unexampled rapidity, sharpened the public curiosity, and fixed it upon party politics. By several letters and pamphlets, which are not now readily to be met with or recognised, Maclean acquired distinction. He became private secretary to Lord Shelburne, and rose to be

under secretary of state during the time that nobleman was in office. In this capacity he might have acquired all that minute and ready acquaintance with state secrets which Junius, during the same period, is proved to have possessed. He was the friend of Burke and Goldsmith, and was, doubtless, a man of considerable ability.

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If Maclean was Junius he must have been a reckless and unprincipled man. In 1771 he published a "Defence of the Ministry, on the subject of the Falkland Islands," no copy of which production has been yet discovered. At this very time, when Maclean was publicly defending the ministry, we are told (in Campbell's "Life of Hugh Boyd"), that he possessed a mortal hatred for the Duke of Grafton, and indulged his resentment by painting him in the blackest colours. He had been dismissed from office, and a person of his temperament would thus have many enemies to revenge, and many rivals to attack. Maclean had his reward for his public defence of the ministry. In 1772 he was appointed, by Lord North, collector of Philadelphia; and his absence upon this commission, as in the case of Sir Philip Francis, tallies with the interval in the correspondence of Junius with Woodfall, an interval which lasted from May, 1772, to January, 1773. In 1773 Maclean returned from America, and went to India, with the brevet rank of lieutenant-colonel. This was an

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appointment of no small emolument, and was thought to be the reward of some greater service than the "Defence of the Ministry in the affair of the Falkland Islands." It is certainly a curious coincidence that, at this exact time, Junius ceased to write. Maclean returned again to England in 1776, and two years afterwards he undertook another voyage to India, being employed by the government, on official business with the nabob of Arcot. He was destined never to return. His last letter was written upon his knee, in the desert of Suez. "I have embarked," he says, "in a crazy ship, with a crazy captain." His presentiment was verified; the "Swallow" packet went down, and all on board perished. In the shipwreck of this vessel perished any writings or documents that, if Maclean was Junius, might have revealed the secret to his contemporaries. Maclean left an enormous property, amounting to two or three hundred thousand pounds.

Such is a brief summary of the leading features in the career of the man whose claims to the authorship of these letters are now undergoing investigation.

Since this hypothesis has been started, a curious passage, in Galt's "Life of West," has been pointed out as favourable to its establishment. "An incident of a curious nature has brought him (Mr. West) to be a party, in some degree, with the singular question respecting the mysterious author of

the celebrated letters of Junius. On the morning that the first of these famous invectives appeared, his friend, Governor Hamilton, happened to call, and, inquiring the news, Mr. West informed him of that bold and daring epistle; ringing for his servant at the same time, he desired the newspaper to be brought in. Hamilton read it over with great attention, and when he had done, laid it on his knees, in a manner that particularly attracted the notice of the painter, who was standing at his easel. ‘This letter,’ said Hamilton, in a tone of vehement feeling, ‘is by that d——d scoundrel, M‘Lean.’—‘What M‘Lean?’ inquired Mr. West. ‘The surgeon of Otway’s regiment; the fellow who attacked me so virulently in the Philadelphia newspaper, on account of the part I felt it my duty to take against one of the officers.’—‘This letter is by him. I know these very words. I may well remember them;’ and he read over several phrases and sentiments which M‘Lean employed against him. Mr. West then informed the governor that M‘Lean was in the country, and that he was personally acquainted with him. ‘He came over,’ said Mr. West, with Colonel Barry, by whom he was introduced to Lord Shelburne (afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne), and is, at present, private secretary to his lordship.’”

This anecdote is certainly of considerable weight; some passages in the letters, possessed by Sir David

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Brewster, bear a strong resemblance to Junius, and might well have been the careless productions of that vigorous mind ; the declaration of Junius that he had served under one of the Townshends applies to Maclean. The character of Maclean, habitually a gambler and a debauchee, discovers the absence of principle which must have characterized it if Maclean was Junius. The opinion of his friends, and even of the government authorities in Ireland, pointed him out as the author. He stood in the situation in which he could have learned the secrets that Junius knew—he had been ejected from office by those whom Junius attacked. These are a few of the points favourable to the identity of Junius and Lachlan Maclean. They are not put forward as a fair abstract of the arguments in his favour, for the inquiry is still in progress, and every day may bring forth some decisive fact.

The objections to this hypothesis are certainly not less weighty than those which are opposed to many others. To begin with one of the weakest : Maclean, although not a very young man, does not appear to have been old. Dr. Goode, the author of the preliminary essay to Woodfall's Junius, who, having no particular hypothesis to substantiate, is an impartial authority, was convinced that Junius was a man of age and experience. When we find that every one of those intimations, which are so impossible to be avoided or to

be consistently feigned, favour this supposition ; that none oppose it, and that, according to the best judges of handwriting, the handwriting of Junius is that of the early part of the eighteenth century, we shall be inclined, in the absence of strong proof to the contrary, to agree with Dr. Goode, and to say that a candidate for the reputation of Junius should have been able to remember the great Walpolean battles, and to have seen the jesuitical books burnt at Paris.

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Another stronger objection is the denial of Mr. Woodfall. Although it is highly probable that that gentleman did not know who was Junius, yet he had many means of discovering who were not. Minute discrepancies between the delivery of the private letters and the positions or occupations of any reputed Junius, might have enabled him authoritatively to negative the claims of many of those with whom he was intimate. Maclean was one of these ; yet when he set out for India, and the report that Junius was gone was whispered about, Woodfall ridiculed it as absurd.*

The same objection which occurs to negative the pretensions of Boyd, will apply also to any letters or pamphlets of Maclean, which, written after the date of Junius's letters, may bear traces of his style. It

* I have received an assurance of this fact from the present Mr. Woodfall.

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was the fashion to imitate the style of Junius; the whole herd of political writers studied his phrases with curious attention, and thought they succeeded in rivalling him in proportion as they could forge his peculiarities. This mania was universal at the time. Sheridan was absorbed by it. Any argument from similarity of style must, therefore, be based upon writings anterior to the appearance of Junius.

Still more serious difficulties are encountered in the miscellaneous letters. The same letter, called “A Grand Council upon the Affairs of Ireland,” which has been already noticed as decisive against Lord George Sackville’s claims, is hostile to those of Maclean. If Lord Sackville wrote it, he taunted himself with that charge of cowardice which imbittered his life—if Maclean wrote it he held up to ridicule and contempt Lord Shelburne, his patron and benefactor. In neither instance could this have been a sacrifice to security, for the letter did not bear the signature of Junius, and therefore could not have deceived the public. Junius had not yet commenced his letters, no especial cause for concealment had hitherto occurred.

Another of these miscellaneous letters, signed “Vindex,” will be conclusive against any thing but unanswerable evidence. Junius, after the termination of the dispute with Spain upon the subject of the Falkland islands, wrote two letters, under the

signature of “Vindex,” inveighing against the compromise which had been made. He first attacked the ministers, and concluded with an insult to the king, so gross and personal that the printer objected to publish it—that part was cancelled; even at the time of publishing Woodfall’s edition it was thought too offensive to be restored, nor has it ever yet been made public. The MS. of this letter is now in Mr. Woodfall’s possession, written in the handwriting of Junius, and marked with the private signature “C.” The second letter is a continuation of the first, and passes from the ministers to their defenders. Maclean, as we have seen, was one of these. The letter is as follows :

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“Sir,—Pray tell that ingenious gentleman, Mr. Laughlin Maclean, that when the King of Spain writes to the King of Great Britain, he omits four-fifths of his titles, and when our king writes to him, his address is always ‘Carolo Dei gratiâ Hispaniarum utriusque Siciliæ et Indiarum Regi Catholico.’ It was reserved for his present majesty to say, in a public instrument, ‘Falkland island is one of my possessions, and yet I allow the King of Spain to reserve a claim of prior right, and I declare myself *satisfied* with that reservation.’ In spite of Mr. Laughlin’s disinterested, unbroken, melodious, eloquence, it is a

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As the authenticity of this letter is unquestionable, it follows that, if Lachlan Maclean was Junius, he must not only have written against himself, but he must have written also in ridicule of himself; and this without the object of secrecy, since no one but the printer knew that Junius and Vindex were identical.

If we admit that Junius was such a knave as to vilify his patron, and so foolish as to ridicule himself, it would be idle to insist upon the improbability of his writing, at the same time, upon both sides of a public question; or to urge that the line of politics advocated by Junius is not likely to be that which would have been professed by Maclean. Yet it would certainly require some explanation to account for the fact of a secretary of Lord Shelburne writing as a partisan of George Grenville, and making those very letters a ground of merit with his patron. Such must have been the case if Maclean was Junius; for Lord Shelburne must have known the fact, or the

* These letters are both printed in Woodfall's edition of Junius, vol. iii., p. 343.

object of the author could not have been attained. Lord Shelburne may be supposed to be ignorant who Vindex was, ignorant also who it was who had exhibited him as Malagrida ; but he could not have been ignorant who Junius was, or Junius must have remained unrewarded ; and as the present hypothesis represents Junius as an unprincipled adventurer, who wrote on either or on both sides, as his malignity or his interest dictated, such a supposition is not admissible.

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These are a few of the objections which occur at the first view, to this hypothesis. When these are satisfactorily removed, Mr. Lachlan Maclean will be as likely as any one of his contemporaries to have written the letters of Junius. Circumstantial evidence, arising from style, handwriting, or particular coincidence, may then be produced ; it may be shown that he had all the facilities of minute information, and all the acerbity of feeling against the war-office underlings, which fallaciously pointed out Sir Philip Francis as Junius ;—that he had the intimate connexion with the Duke of Portland which would have put him in possession of the intelligence, and placed him under the influence of the bias that have thrown an improbable suspicion upon that nobleman ;—that he had the personal animosities that might have actuated Sackville—the vanity which drew ambiguous

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denials from Horne Tooke*—or the genius, the vigour of intellect, which appeared to point out Burke. All this may be proved, and much more, yet so long as direct evidence is wanting, and the objections which have been before enumerated remain, hearsay anecdotes and circumstantial evidence will weigh as dust in the balance ; or rather no circumstantial evidence can exist, since the line of coincidences is not unbroken.

It is not altogether improbable that direct evidence of the authorship of these letters still exists, although its publication is reserved for some future period. It is well known that Sir Philip Francis has left memoirs which, after an appointed time, will see the light. A suspicion has also long prevailed that the secret is in the custody of the Grenville family ; and the answers that have been, on all occasions, returned to inquiries upon this point, merely denying any personal knowledge, but declining any answer to the real question, whether the secret is supposed by the family to be in their custody, certainly favours the

* When Mr. Woodfall projected his edition of Junius, he applied to Horne Tooke for any information he possessed upon the subject ; Tooke pretended to evade his questions, spoke of danger to the

writer even at that distance of time, and evidently wished to favour the absurd report, believed and kept alive by his immediate followers, that he was Junius.

supposition. If this suspicion should turn out to be well founded, it will be better to wait, with patience, for the certainty, than to amuse our curiosity with plausible guesses.

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Such is a condensed account of the state of the controversy upon the authorship of the Letters of Junius.

CHAPTER VII.

Lord Mansfield's doctrine of libels—Resignation of Lord Camden—Of the Duke of Grafton—The North administration—Biographical anecdotes of John Dunning—Of Thurlow—Middlesex election—Private interference of George III. in the decision of a cause before the courts—Subordinate changes in office—Attempts of the lords and commons to preserve privacy in their debates—Arrest of the printers—Released by the city magistrates—Proceedings of the commons.

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THE terror spread among the retainers of the minister, by the scathing satire of Junius, convinced the Tories of the necessity of silencing the press, and introduced another topic of party contention. The celebrated "Letter to the King" appeared in December of this year; and, like number forty-five of the North Briton, it was hailed by the Tories as an opportunity at which party vengeance might wear the name of loyalty. An ex-officio information was im-

mediately filed against Woodfall, the printer of the paper in which the letters appeared ; and, since juries chosen from the people would be likely to consider the satire deserved, and the author guiltless, Lord Mansfield undertook to withdraw the essential part of the charge from their judgment. It was upon this occasion that he propounded the doctrine which became such a favourite with his party, that, in questions of libel, the fact of publication was the only point to be determined by the jury ;—whether the publication was a libel was for the decision of the judge. The sturdy common-sense of twelve Englishmen was, however, superior to the sophistry of the Tory judge. The words and effect of their verdict, “guilty of printing and publishing only,” were the best reply that could be given to his charge. Since it could not be denied that such a verdict amounted to an acquittal, it was evident that something more was required for a conviction than a verdict upon the fact of publication.

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The commencement of the session of 1770 was signalized by Lord Camden’s defection from the ministerial side. In the debate upon the address he broke the silence which he had long preserved. Rising from the woolsack, he said he had sat there too long—for some time he had beheld, with silent indignation, the arbitrary measures which were pursuing by the ministry. He had often, he said,

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drooped and hung down his head in council, and disapproved, by his looks, steps which he knew his avowed opposition could not prevent. He would do so no longer, but would openly and boldly speak his sentiments. As to the incapacitating vote of the house of commons, he agreed with Lord Chatham, who had spoken before him, that it was a direct attack upon the first principles of the constitution ; and that if, in giving his decision as a judge, he was to pay any regard to that vote, or any other vote of the house of commons, in opposition to the known and established laws of the land, he should be a traitor to his trust and an enemy to his country. The ministry, he said, by their violent and tyrannical conduct, had alienated the minds of the people from his majesty's government, he had almost said from his majesty's person ; that, in consequence, a spirit of discontent had spread itself into every corner of the kingdom, and was every day increasing ; and if some methods were not devised to appease the clamours that so universally prevailed, he did not know but the people, in despair, might turn their own avengers, and take the redress of their grievances into their own hands. In a word, he accused the ministry, if not in express terms, yet by direct implication, of having formed a conspiracy against the liberties of their country.*

* Gentleman's Magazine for 1770.

This declaration of hostilities was feebly answered by Lord Mansfield; who, instead of defending the conduct of his party in the house of commons, merely said, that he should carry his opinion of the incapacitating vote with him to his grave. Nothing could draw from him any further explanation. He even sat silent when Lord Chatham replied that, if his opinion was in favour of the ministry, it would be pronounced without hesitation, and called upon him to speak it, if he would not lie under the imputation of being conscious to himself of the illegality of the vote, and yet being restrained by some unworthy motive from avowing it to the world.

The unexpected declaration of Earl Camden compelled the minister to adjourn the house for a week, in order to make the necessary arrangements to supply his place. The seals were offered to Charles York, the second son of Earl Hardwicke, and who had been twice attorney-general. Charles York was a sound lawyer, and an able and honest man. He accepted the seals with great reluctance, and at the entreaty of the king, but died before the patent of his peerage could be prepared. The vacant dignity was then offered to Lord Mansfield, but the Tories were too unpopular to induce that prudent judge to resign a permanent for a contingent office; several others also refused, and the Tories were, at length, compelled to put the seals in commission, and make Lord Mansfield speaker of the house of lords.

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While Lord Camden remained in office several Whigs, who held subordinate stations, thought themselves protected by his authority, and retained their places—these now thought themselves obliged to resign. In the debate upon the address, in the commons, the Marquis of Granby apologized for the vote he had given for seating Colonel Luttrell, as an error in judgment, to be bewailed as the greatest misfortune of his life, and he resigned all his places except his colonel's commission. James Grenville, who had hitherto retained his vice-treasurership of Ireland, resigned; Dunning, the solicitor-general, the Dukes of Beaufort and Manchester, the Earls of Coventry and Huntingdon—all who did not wish to be entirely committed to the Tory party, and involved in their unpopularity, followed his example.

These defections added considerably to the strength of the minority, and the attacks of the Whigs were incessant throughout the session. The Tories appear to have felt that no defence they could make would convert their enemies into supporters. They admitted their unpopularity,* and nearly abandoning the debate, reserved their triumph for the division.

* In the debate on the address, Charles Jenkinson said, "The honourable gentleman seems to be alarmed for the authority of this house. I should readily agree with the honourable gentleman, if the authority of this house was to depend on the voice of the people out of this house."—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvi., col. 690.

In the lords the opposition was still stronger ; there the Duke of Grafton found himself exposed to the indignant eloquence of Chatham, once his mentor and his friend. Educated in those party principles which accustomed him to place some value upon the goodwill of his countrymen, and finding himself an object of public hatred ; confounded in the house of lords by the invective and reproaches of his former friends, and followed, even into his strictest privacy, by that terrible and mysterious shade, Junius, the duke could endure his situation no longer. On the 28th of January he resigned.

Thus ended the Grafton administration, having sown, during a short existence, more germinating seeds of discontent than years of Whig government could eradicate. It was succeeded by a cabinet which, governing upon the same principles, and deriving no experience from the errors of their predecessors, brought national disaster and defeat to fill up the measure of their country's sufferings.

Lord North was the new minister, and he commenced the duties of his office by supplying the vacancies which had occurred upon the resignation of Lord Camden. Of these alterations the most important was, that Dunning, the late solicitor-general, was succeeded by Thurlow, a circumstance which presents to us two men, each eminent in the party struggles of the time.

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John Dunning was, at this time, a successful barrister, and the history of his early life would be merely a recapitulation of the ordinary instances of pecuniary difficulties and unwearied assiduity which form the frequent introduction to the biography of celebrated lawyers. His most intimate companions, while a student and a junior barrister, were Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Horne. We may pause for a moment, to mark the three youths assembled over their indigent meal,* and look onward to the future, when one will be dazzling the senate by his sparkling eloquence; the second a powerful demagogue, swaying the multitude at his will; while the third presides upon the bench of justice, revered as one of the oracles of the law. Was it that a secret sympathy emanated from the great although different powers of these celebrated men, and brought them thus early together, or should we deem their future fortune the effect of their early friendship,—that their latent energies were called forth by contact?

* In Stephen's "Life of Horne Tooke," the biographer says, that he had been frequently assured, by Mr. Horne Tooke, that he, Kenyon, and Dunning, were accustomed to dine together, during the vacation, at a little eating-house in the neighbourhood of Chancery-lane, for seven-pence halfpenny

each. "As to Dunning and myself," said he, "we were generous, for we gave the girl who waited upon us a penny apiece, but Kenyon, who always knew the value of money, sometimes rewarded her with a halfpenny, and sometimes with a promise."

Dunning continued to frequent the courts without success, until a happy accident introduced him to notice. One of the leaders of his circuit being taken ill, intrusted him with his briefs, and Dunning was no longer without practice. He had the good fortune to be engaged on the popular side in one of the cases upon general warrants, and his bold and able argument rendered him known to the Whigs, and a favourite with the people. It was the early object of the Grafton administration to shield their Tory principles and Tory measures by Whig names. Dunning, therefore, in 1768, was made solicitor-general, and was, in the same year, by the influence of Lord Shelburne, returned for Calne, in Wiltshire.

Dunning had many natural disadvantages ; his personal appearance was mean and abject in the extreme, his voice husky, his articulation difficult, and his tone of speaking monotonous and destitute of animation ; yet, notwithstanding these formidable impediments, he soon became eminent as a parliamentary speaker. His language was always pure, always elegant, and the best words dropped easily from his lips, into the best places, with a fluency at all times astonishing. His style of speaking consisted of the artifices which the old rhetoricians taught, and which Cicero practised, but Demosthenes disdained. Many properly censured this style as vicious ; but although they censured as critics, they were transported as

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hearers. The faculty, however, for which he was chiefly famed, and which all found irresistible, was his wit. This relieved the weary, calmed the resentful, and animated the drowsy ; this drew smiles even from such as were the objects of it, scattered flowers over a desert, and, like sunbeams sparkling on a lake, gave spirit and vivacity to the dullest and least interesting subject. Perhaps the vivacity of his imagination sometimes prompted him to sport where it would have been wiser to argue, and perhaps the exactness of his memory sometimes induced him to answer remarks that deserved no notice, and to enlarge on small circumstances which added little to the weight of his argument ; but those only who have experienced the difficulty of exerting all the mental faculties in one instant, when the least deliberation might lose the tide of action irrecoverably, can make the requisite allowance for the defects of a public speaker.

Such was Dunning, as he has been described to us by his contemporaries, and as he has been portrayed by the friendly pencil of Sir William Jones. As a party man he was honourable in his engagements, and consistent through life. He entered the house of commons as a Whig, and as a follower of the Earl of Shelburne—the connexion with his party and his leader was only terminated by death.

Edward Thurlow, who succeeded Dunning as

solicitor-general, was a man of a very different order of intellect. His father was a clergyman, possessed of an inconsiderable living, and his family connexions do not appear to have been opulent or influential. "There were two Thurlows in my country—Thurlow the secretary and Thurlow the carrier. I am descended from the carrier," was an answer to an inquirer, as illustrative of the character of the man as of the antiquity of his family. Thurlow completed his education at Peter-house, Cambridge, and manifested, at the university, all the leading features of his after character. Haughty and churlish, overbearing and obstinate, idle and irregular, he appeared calculated to shine neither in dissipation nor in study. But his ability, in some degree, counterbalanced his want of application; and although he never conciliated his tutors, he left the university with the reputation of having acquired a tolerable knowledge of the classics. From Cambridge he repaired to London, and commenced his legal education. In 1758 he was called to the bar, and underwent the usual ordeal of obscurity and indigence. For some time his biography is but a recapitulation of ingenious devices for supplying his necessities, and of stratagems for reaching an assize town on his circuit without the aid of money. But this period was surmounted; he grew into practice, obtained the favour of the celebrated Duchess of Queensberry, and

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through her, the patronage of Lord Bute, and continued to rise in his profession until, in November 1768, he was elected for the borough of Tamworth, and was now chosen to succeed Dunning as solicitor-general. Thurlow was a Tory by natural disposition. A man whose originally narrow mind had never been enlarged by the acquisition of general knowledge, or even by any very profound study of his own profession ; and who attempted to cover his deficiencies by a haughty assurance and overbearing demeanour. He possessed a bigotry upon which all argument fell pointless, an obstinacy which no reason could shake, and an intrepidity of assertion which was either ludicrous from his ignorance, or astonishing from his audacity.* He had a turbulent kind of eloquence, which sought rather to overbear opposition

* Thus, speaking in the house of commons, of the decisions prior to the revolution, he undertook to defend the Stuart judges, and said that "even in those times when judges were not independent, the streams of justice ran with remarkable clearness."—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxix., col. 1428. Another instance is related by Bishop Watson, in his autobiography. The bishop, in a debate, had cited a passage from Grotius, respecting the definition of the word "right." "The chancellor, in his reply,"

says the Bishop, "asserted that he perfectly well remembered the passage I had quoted from Grotius, and that it solely respected natural, but was inapplicable to civil rights. Lord Loughborough, the first time I saw him after the debate, assured me, that before he went to sleep that night, he had looked into Grotius, and was astonished to find that the chancellor, in contradicting me, had presumed on the ignorance of the house."

than to convince—to silence rather than to confute. The sturdy boldness with which he spoke, and the uncompromising position which he always assumed, obtained for him, with the multitude, and perhaps with the king, a reputation for honesty of purpose which his conduct sufficiently shows he did not possess. Although always opposed to the popular sentiment, he was not personally unpopular; the people could not believe that a man so coarse in his tastes, so rude in his manner, could be a parasite or a courtier.*

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The chief occupation of the new ministry was to repel the attacks of the opposition. The Middlesex election was still a fruitful theme for motions. Mr. Dowdeswell, a leading Whig member, was constant in his motions upon this subject, and Dunning, Glynn, Beckford, Sir George Yonge, Townshend, Grenville, and Barrè, were always ready to support him. Lord North met all their attacks with easy humour, and, supported by Onslow, Blackstone, Jenkinson, De Grey, and Thurlow, as speakers, and by a large majority of the house as voters, met a proposed string of resolutions by a vote, that “the decision of the house upon the case of Wilkes was agreeable to

* *Strictures on the Lives of Eminent Lawyers.* Public Characters. Butler's *Reminiscences.* Roscoe's *Lives of Eminent Lawyers—&c.*

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the law of the land, and fully authorized by the law and custom of parliament.”

Similar attempts were made in the house of lords, where the Earl of Sandwich was now the ministerial orator. The Marquis of Rockingham and Earl of Chatham, however, were the only Whig speakers, and their motion was negatived by a large majority.* A resolution was, on the contrary, carried, “that it was a violation of the constitutional rights of the commons for the lords to interfere with that house in any matter wherein their jurisdiction was competent.”

In this debate the Earl of Sandwich took occasion to charge Lord Camden with duplicity, in having permitted those proceedings, in silence, which he now so openly condemned. But Camden defended himself with success. He rose, and declared, upon his honour, that long before those proceedings had been resolved upon he had denounced them to the Duke of Grafton, as illegal and imprudent; that, when he found both his advice and opinion rejected and despised, and that those who had the immediate direction of them were determined to carry them into execution against every remonstrance he could make, he withdrew from the council whenever those subjects were agitated, and had declined giving any further opinion or advice relative to them; that his

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 798. † Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 822.

reasons for so withdrawing himself proceeded from a conviction that his presence would only distract measures which his single voice could not prevent; and that his further opinion had never been asked, because the conductors well knew he would have advised against them. Chatham came to the assistance of his friend, and added his testimony to the truth of his defence, and the integrity of his conduct. Precluded from any further motions, the Whigs attempted to proceed by bill. Lord Chatham brought it forward, but the attempt only succeeded in keeping alive the spirit of opposition, and in drawing from Lord Camden an able and constitutional speech.

The Tory policy with respect to America was weak and undecided. Alarmed by the menacing posture assumed by the colonists, Lord North repealed a portion of the duties; but, contrary to the admonition of the Whigs, and to every principle of sound policy, insisted upon retaining the obnoxious tea-tax. This miserable trembling course of conduct met the success it deserved—increased the confidence and excited the contempt of the Americans.*

One triumph the Whigs secured this session, a triumph as glorious as the ministerial legislation was contemptible. This was their carrying through both houses, in spite of the opposition of Lord North and

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 822.

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his coadjutors, a bill for abolishing the shameful system of deciding contested elections according to the interests of a faction, and establishing that admirable mode of decision which still prevails. The evil was so notorious,* and its recurrence was so constant, that it would be difficult to anticipate the line of argument which could be adopted in its defence. The principle of the bill could not be condemned, fault therefore was to be found with its details ; and when the great parliamentary experience of George Grenville had obviated those objections, the Tories retired to their last and impregnable position, that the old method had worked well, the new one was full of uncertainty and danger. “ While,” said the attorney-general, “ we seek to avoid an evil which, in its fullest extent, we have endured for many years, without any great hurt or damage, we should not involve ourselves in dangers which may prove pernicious, and even

* In the debate upon rendering this bill perpetual, in 1774, Mr. T. Townshend described the previous election decisions : “ Twenty or thirty members attended, and possibly half those asleep, during the examination of the evidence ; but immediately as the question was put, down stairs came tumbling a number of members, who had not heard a word of the trial,

and whose only excuse for voting as they did was, that they were not in their senses.”—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvii., col. 1064. Other members added their testimony, that, upon these occasions, the members coming to vote under the old system, were usually so intoxicated from Arthur’s or Almack’s, that they could scarcely stand.

destructive. Better to endure those evils of which we know the extent, than, in a sudden start of disgust and humoursome passion, to ‘fly to others which we know not of.’ ”*

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For once this veteran argument failed. As the ministers did not condescend to intimate whence these dangers were to proceed, the country gentlemen, for once, doubted their reality ; some of them also probably remembered that, during the supremacy of the Whigs, they had been excluded from their own counties and boroughs by the system which their ministerial friends now extolled. The ministry was left in a minority of 123 to 185, and the bill passed.

At the rising of parliament, in May, the results of Tory government were evident in every part of the empire. America was in rebellion ; the revival of an obsolete law taking from the Irish house of commons the right of originating money bills, had thrown that island into confusion ; and at home multitudes were forcing themselves into the presence of the sovereign, sounding in his ears their fierce remonstrances, and boldly throwing back his reprimand.† Such was the

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 921.
Hatsell's Precedents, vol. ii., p.
20.

† A few days after the end of the session, the corporation of London, who had already pre-

sented an “Address, Petition, and Remonstrance,” which had been unfavourably received, proceeded to St. James's with a second. The answer, like that to the former, was, in effect, a reprimand ; but

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state of things during the recess ; but Lord North could still reckon upon his parliamentary majority, and laugh at the efforts of the Whigs.

The death of George Grenville, which happened in November, made some difference in the state of parties. He had been at the head of a section which bore no very decided party character, and was united chiefly by the bond of family connexion and the common object of opposition. The Tory portion of this body now rejoined their original party ; the Whigs remained with theirs. The old Whigs, under the Marquis of Rockingham, continued, as usual, to extend their family connexions, and oppose the ministry ; while Shelburne, Temple, and Chatham, each the sun of a little system, looked out into the nation for assistance, and relied upon their popularity for their strength.

the lord mayor, who headed the deputation, was Beckford. That intrepid and violent Whig, to the amazement of the court, and with a boldness peculiar to himself, made an immediate and spirited reply, which he concluded in the following words : “ Whoever has dared, or shall hereafter endeavour, by false insinuations and suggestions, to alienate your majesty’s affections from your loyal subjects in general, and from the city of London in particular, and to with-

draw your confidence and regard from your people, is an enemy to your majesty’s person and family, a violator of the public peace, and a betrayer of our happy constitution as it was established at the glorious and necessary revolution.” — *Annual Register*. Alderman Beckford died a few weeks after this event, and his fellow-citizens erected a monument in their Guildhall, to commemorate his patriotism and his services.

The principal feature of the session which commenced in November, was the attempt made by the Whigs to impugn the doctrine of Lord Mansfield as to the jurisdiction of juries in cases of libel. In the house of commons, Sergeant Glynn, the most popular lawyer of the day, brought forward the subject, dwelt upon the importance of the innovation, and demonstrated, both from principle and precedent, that the doctrine of the chief justice was not law. He concluded with a motion for a committee, to inquire into the administration of criminal justice, in cases relating to the liberty of the press. A debate ensued, in which the London members rendered themselves particularly conspicuous. Alderman Oliver declared that his constituents thought that the courts of justice were not always regulated, in their decisions, either by the principles of law, or the spirit of the constitution ; they could see and feel the baneful effects of court influence and Tory doctrines. In their apprehension, he said, maxims of jurisprudence which sap the foundation of our free government had been countenanced and propagated by those very men who ought to preserve the purity of the laws, and to check every innovation upon the rights of the people ; and of these men he believed the chief delinquent to be Lord Chief Justice Mansfield. Alderman Sawbridge supported the cause his constituents had

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so warmly espoused ; but Alderman Townshend said, that the doctrine of Lord Mansfield was only part of a system, and that the influence of the king was directly exercised to control the judicial decisions of the judges. He related, as proof, a revelation lately made, upon his deathbed, by Sir Joseph Yates. “ A late judge,” he said, “ equally remarkable for his knowledge and integrity, was tampered with by the administration. He was solicited to favour the crown, in certain trials which were then depending between it and the subject. I hear some desiring me to name the judge, but there is no necessity for it. The fact is known to several members of this house ; and if I do not speak truth let those who can contradict me. I call upon them to rise that the public may not be abused—but all are silent, and can as little invalidate what I have said as what I am going to say. This great, this honest judge, being thus solicited in vain, what was now to be done ? What was the last resource of baffled injustice ? That was learned from a short conversation that passed between him and some friends, a little before his death. The last and most powerful engine was employed. A letter was sent him directly from a great personage ; but, as he suspected it to contain something dishonourable, he sent it back unopened. Is not this a subject that deserves inquiry ?”—The ministers, at the mention

of this letter, stared upon each other, but made no reply.*

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The debate was continued upon its original ground, and all the distinguished speakers on each side were called forth by the occasion. Among a crowd of less illustrious names, appear Burke, Dunning, and Barrè, upon the Whig side, while Sir Gilbert Elliot, Onslow, De Grey, and Thurlow, stand conspicuous among the Tories. Thurlow's speech, upon this occasion, is very characteristic. He held that the question as to whether a paper be a libel, should, whether law or fact, be left to the judge; and that it was not of any consequence which it was. No justice could, in state trials, be expected from a jury, as they may justly be considered as parties concerned against the crown. Having disposed of the question in this summary manner, he called for punishment upon the promoters of the motion. "If we allow every pitiful patriot thus to insult us with ridiculous accusations, without making him pay forfeit for his temerity, we shall be eternally pestered with the humming and buzzing of these stingless wasps. I hope we shall now handle them so roughly as to make this the last of such audacious attempts. They are already ridiculous and contemptible;—to crown their disgrace, let us inflict some exemplary punishment."† How rarely would

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1229. † Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1291.

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Thurlow have emulated Jefferies. The solicitor-general was well calculated to remove any disgust for lawyers which the conduct of Yates might have created in the royal mind. A king would never have begged a little tyranny in vain from Thurlow.

Several incidental debates occurred in the house of lords also, upon the subject of Lord Mansfield's charge upon Woodfall's trial. Chatham, Camden, the Duke of Richmond, and the Duke of Manchester, were incessant in their attacks upon the chief justice. He met them all except Lord Camden. Before the searching interrogatories of that constitutional lawyer the spirit of Mansfield evidently quailed. Even after pledging himself to discuss the question he continued to evade the subject; and when, having specially summoned the lords, every peer came prepared for the promised debate; the earl's courage apparently failed, and he merely informed his impatient auditors, that he had left a copy of the judgment of the King's Bench, in Woodfall's case, with the clerk, and that those peers who pleased might take copies.

At the commencement of the year 1771, several changes took place, by which the ministry acquired additional strength. Mr. Bathurst was created Baron Apsley and Lord Chancellor, Sir William De

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1313.

Grey became chief justice of the common pleas, Thurlow attorney-general, and Wedderburne's uncertain Toryism was fixed by the post of solicitor-general. Lord Weymouth resigned the seals to Lord Rochfort; the Earl of Sandwich became first lord of the admiralty, in the place of Sir Edward Hawke; and the Earl of Halifax succeeded Lord Sandwich as secretary of state, resigning his office of privy seal to the Earl of Suffolk.

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Among the objects now striven for by the Whigs none was more valuable, and few more popular than the abolition of that veil of secrecy which had been recently cast over all parliamentary proceedings. During the long administration of the Whigs, we have a continued series of reports of the debates, broken only by occasional and short intervals, which were generally caused by the resentment of particular members, who considered themselves either overlooked or misrepresented. When, however, the Tories recovered their power, the opposition of the house of commons to the publicity of their debates became systematic; the established vehicles for this species of information were compelled to discontinue their reports; the parliamentary history becomes meager and uncertain, and must be sought in the journals of the house, and in the single speeches which were occasionally published by their authors. Every method was taken to prevent their debates

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The most effectual precaution was thought to be to debate with closed doors, and for some time this practice was strictly observed. In the session of 1770, the terror of the Tory peers, lest the speeches of their Whig opponents should go forth to the public, produced a scene in the house of lords which had nearly brought them into hostile collision with the commons. The Duke of Manchester was descanting with considerable eloquence upon the condition of the country, the causes of popular complaints, and the contempt with which those complaints were heard, when he was interrupted by Lord Gower, who moved that the house be cleared. The Duke of Richmond denied the right of the earl to move to clear the house while a peer was speaking. Immediately a violent outcry arose, and all became clamour and confusion. "Clear the house—clear the house!" was echoed from side to side. The Duke of Richmond's voice was drowned in the clamour. Lord Chatham arose, hoping that his age, his reputation, his abilities, would force attention; but in vain. He continued, without being heard, for some time. He sent the Duke of Richmond to the speaker, to acquaint him that he wanted to speak to the construction of the standing order. But he could not be heard. At length, wearied out, he declared that, if he was not to have the privilege of a lord of

parliament, and allowed the exercise of free debate, it was needless and idle for him to attend parliament. He left the house and about eighteen lords followed him. No sooner were these peers retired than the crowd of strangers, including many members of the house of commons, were indiscriminately ejected. Some of these members were intrusted with a bill from their own house, and demanded to be readmitted; but no sooner had they delivered their bill, than the outcry began again; time was not allowed them to return of their own accord, but they were hurried and hooted out of the house, many of the peers coming down to the bar and almost pushing them out. Such was the zeal of the Tories in favour of secrecy. The commons were highly indignant; George Onslow returned to the commons, in a passion, and immediately moved that the house be cleared, "peers and all." This the Whigs, who wished to take more serious notice of the insult, in vain opposed. Those Whig peers who had left their own house because they would not be a party to the insult upon the commons, were now ignominiously turned out—there was no Tory peer present.*

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After this scene, which Colonel Barrè described

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1317—29.

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as unequalled by any bear-garden or cock-pit, strict orders were given by the lords, to their officers, to admit no persons into their house except commoners intrusted with bills, and to see that these departed as soon as they had made their customary obediences. The delicacy of Sir Fletcher Norton, the speaker of the house of commons, was so shocked by the account of this riot, that, upon the occasion of some clamour, a few days after, he called to the members, “ Pray, gentlemen, be orderly ; you are almost as bad as the other house.” *

The Tories of the house of commons, although they manifested some resentment at their own exclusion, were no less absolute in their own house. At the commencement of the debate upon the bill to secure the rights of electors, upon a lord of the treasury made the now customary motion to clear the house, and some little discussion arose. George Onslow said that, as long as the newspapers published the debates he would always move the house to take this step ; that none but the house had a right to print them, and that this would show whether any of the members were concerned in writing them. Several of the Whig members replied to him. They

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1355. From the London Museum, which was now the boldest reporter of parliamentary news.

said they were astonished to hear him make this motion, seeing that the reporter of the debates, whoever he was, had greatly improved *his* speeches, and had even made them sense and grammar; and that the impartiality with which the speeches were reported showed that they were not composed by any man under the influence of party.

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Onslow and his party persevered, but without success. Sir William Meredith, and several other Whig members, were always ready to report any important debate, and either sent their notes to the newspapers or published them as a pamphlet. Finding their first expedient fail, the Tories advanced a step further, applied the privileges of parliament to purposes of violence, and thus turned the power which had been given them by the constitution to resist the tyranny of the crown, into an instrument to destroy their responsibility to the people. Instead of shutting out reporters they undertook to terrify printers. In the session of 1771, the house issued orders for the attendance of two printers, who had thus offended; and when these orders were treated with contempt, despatched their sergent-at-arms to bring them before them in custody. The printers absconded, and a reward of fifty pounds was offered for their apprehension. The crusade thus commenced, the majority found no lack of objects of vengeance; six other persons were soon after de-

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nounced* for the same crime, and a most obstinate struggle ensued between the parties. The Whigs, finding that arguments to expediency and justice were alike answered by cries of question, availed themselves of every expedient for the delay which the forms of the house allowed, and persisted in continual motions for adjournment. The numbers upon these divisions varied from 143 to 70 on the side of the majority, and from 55 to 10 on that of the minority. The majority, however, were finally victorious; the six printers were ordered to attend; some were reprimanded, one was in the custody of the lords for a similar misdemeanor, and one who did not obey, was ordered to be taken into the custody of the sergeant-at-arms.†

A few days afterwards, the three who stood out in contempt were taken. Wheble, one of those named in the proclamation, had already obtained the opinion of Mr. Morris, a barrister, upon the legality of the warrant, and that gentleman had advised, that any magistrate before whom he might be brought by virtue of such a warrant would, if he did his duty, set him at large, and commit the assailant (whether he were a king's herald or a speaker's messenger), unless he gave good bail for his appearance.‡

* Colonel Onslow was again said, when he rose to move the the Tory champion. He had order for their attendance.

“three brace of printers more,” he † Annual Register. Parl. Hist.

‡ Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 96.

The city magistrates were not slow to act upon this opinion. Wheble obtained a friend to discover him and claim the reward, and was carried before Wilkes, who was now an alderman, at Guildhall. Wilkes liberated him without hesitation, bound over the captor to appear at the sessions to answer for the assault, and obliged the printer, by a recognizance, to appear and prosecute. Thompson, the other printer named in the proclamation, was also taken, and carried before Alderman Oliver, who acted in precisely the same manner. The third delinquent, Miller, the printer of the Evening Post, now surrendered himself, and was taken before Mr. Brass Crosby, the lord mayor. The proceedings had evidently been pre-arranged: the deputy sergent-at-arms found Aldermen Wilkes and Oliver with the lord mayor, and the three magistrates immediately discharged his prisoner, and held himself to bail.

This bold proceeding on the part of the city magistrates cannot be defended as legal; but neither is it to be condemned as factious. That the house of commons possessed the privilege they thus abused is indubitable; but the legality of their proceedings only magnified their danger. At a time when the independence of parliament was but a name, and when the privileges which they held in trust for their constituents had been prostituted to strengthen the prerogative of the crown, it was patriotism to

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The commons could not but resent this attack upon their authority, and they were compelled to persevere in the crusade they had so wantonly commenced. The lord mayor, being a member of the house, was ordered to attend in his place, and he was escorted on his way by thousands of the citizens, who hailed him upon his arrival with one universal shout, prolonged for nearly three minutes ; crowds of respectable citizens thronged around him, and saluted him as “the people’s friend,” “the guardian of the city’s right and the nation’s liberties ;” and, on his return, his horses were taken from his carriage, and he was borne back in triumph to the mansion-house.* Aldermen Oliver and Wilkes were also ordered to attend, together with the lord mayor’s clerk, whom, having got into their power, they forced to rase from his books the recognizance of their messenger. Wilkes refused to attend unless he was allowed to attend in his place ; and he sent a letter to the speaker, claiming to be sworn as knight of the shire of Middlesex.

Brass Crosby and Oliver were committed to the Tower, after two debates, in the former of which the

* Gentleman’s Magazine for 1771.

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Whigs put forth all their powers. The principal point they made was the refusal of the Tories to allow the accused to be heard by their counsel. Colonel Barrè having spoken against the motion for the committal of Oliver, concluded, "That I may not be a witness of this monstrous proceeding I will leave the house; nor do I doubt but every independent, every honest man, every friend to England, will follow me. These walls are unholy, they are baleful, they are deadly, while a prostitute majority holds the bolt of parliamentary omnipotence, and hurls its vengeance only on the virtuous."*

He then retired, and Mr. Dowdeswell, the Caven-
dishes, and nearly all the Whigs, accompanied him.

Upon the next day of sitting, when the motion for the committal of the lord mayor was to be proposed, crowds besieged the parliament house. Lord North was attacked, and only preserved from serious injury by the interference of Sir William Meredith.† When, however, the Tories got into the house, they were unopposed. Few of the Whigs attended; Burke made a short speech and left them, and the accused refused to defend himself in a case which was already prejudged.

Wilkes, even this house of commons was afraid to interfere with. Having made an order for his attend-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvii., col. 152. † *Ibid.*, 153.

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ance, which was disobeyed, they issued another, and then escaped from their embarrassment by adjourning over the day on which he was ordered to attend. The Tory majority was, in effect, vanquished, and the debates were reported more regularly than ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

State of the popular mind—Rise of the democratic party—Biographical anecdotes of John Horne Tooke—The Whigs abandon the cause of corruption—Dissolution of parliament.

THE impunity of Wilkes upon the occasion of his releasing the printers, was a minute, but an important proof of the presence of a new and gigantic power in the elements of government ; it was a tacit and unwilling homage to the sovereignty of the people. The long administration of the Whigs had awakened the middle classes from their political slumber ; during this interval they learned to note, to canvass, to criticise ; and if they were then silent it was because the mass is not easily moved ; and they saw little worthy of condemnation. Their voice was not in the empty clamour which the zeal of Jacobites and the

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spleen of disappointed place-hunters sustained against Sir Robert Walpole—once, indeed, that statesman heard it, and shrunk in terror from the sound. No reliance upon a sure parliamentary majority, no rash counsel from less wary partisans, could induce him to provoke the repetition of that warning. No sooner did he feel that it was no longer the fabricated imitation of Bolingbroke and Pulteney, but the genuine voice of the people which called upon him, than he obeyed in consternation—"I am not so mad as ever again to engage in any thing that looks like an excise."*

It was reserved for Toryism to arouse this sluggish but resistless monster into action. Toryism appeared, and arrested the national exultation in the full tide of victory, drove away the nation's idol, and fixed in his place a king's favourite. A peace which all but its framers deemed dishonourable, and a distribution of patronage which all but Scotchmen deemed unjust, produced a murmur that could not be mistaken. Corruption strove in vain to silence it—she was not yet equal to the contest. Force, the other instrument of Toryism, was sent forth; imprisonments, seizures, military massacres, followed, and the voice was heard in thunder. To the ear of the philosophic statesman it was a fearful sound; it told the presence of a volcanic fire, whose power could not be estimated,

* *Ante*, vol. ii., p. 185.

whose extent could not be measured; which ran beneath the surface, and was confined to no country, peculiar to no clime.

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This heaving in the popular mass was first seen in England. One of its earliest and most important symptoms was the establishment of public meetings; a custom unknown to our earlier constitution, and now adopted as a means through which the people might declare their newly-acquired consciousness of power. These assemblies, in which the nation deliberated without the presence of its aristocratic chiefs, cannot be distinctly traced higher than the year 1769; but they were now of daily occurrence. In them energy and talent gave importance to the humblest tradesman; the rights of the industrious classes were discussed and exaggerated until every individual in the nation felt that he had an interest in the politics of the state. Hence arose the frequent declamations against the aristocratic form which the government had now assumed, and exciting appeals in favour of democracy. The light which had been kindled in England shone as a beacon to the nations, and sent its glare even across the Atlantic. There, amid the forests of the New World, slept a magazine of the elements of rebellion, the remnant of the same spirit which had once overthrown the British monarchy. Toryism supplied the torch, and it exploded

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with a violence that shook the institutions of the Old World, and laid half the thrones of Europe in the dust.

In England these throes and convulsions preceded the birth of a new party. In the metropolis first arose a sect of politicians who boldly set at nought the creeds of both the established parties, and invited the attention of the nation to a third principle of government.

The founders of this party were highly educated and thoughtful men, and the principles they avowed were far more philosophical, in appearance, than those of the Whigs. They disencumbered themselves at once of all veneration for ancient usages and established formulas ; they noted with industry every defect, both in theory and practice, which could be discerned in the government of the country as it was then carried on ; and they employed themselves in devising a reformation which should remove every anomaly, and reduce the constitution to a state of theoretical perfection. In the prosecution of this scheme they would make allowance for no prevailing prejudices, they would suffer no existing interests to impede their progress ; every thing was to be made to bow to the great object of a perfect government ; nothing could be worth sparing which was an impediment in that path. The difference between this new party and the Whigs was, that the former were

reformers in gross, the latter in detail ; the one party were theoretical, the other practical politicians ; the former declared war against all abuses, the latter attacked them only when they became unbearable, and were then careful to adapt their remedy to the existing state of society.

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In arguing upon broad and general principles the disciples of this school of politicians have always possessed a manifest superiority over the Whigs ; they were confined within no limits, and were not afraid to push their principles lest they should lead them to some too violent or disagreeable conclusion. But as they have been superior in theoretical argument so they have been deficient in power. The subject was of too mighty and extensive a nature to be embraced by ordinary minds ; yet it involved the fortune of every member of the community. Upon matters of mere speculation men are often ready to yield their credence to high authority ; but upon those which practically affect their own interest they require substantial proof. All knew that this was a subject upon which the highest intellect might well become bewildered ; they knew also that the consequences of an error were incalculable, and they treated the professors of the new doctrines as visionaries and enthusiasts ; they thought their reasoning specious but unsound, and their object, even if attain-

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able, not worth the general disorganization through which alone it could be accomplished. The middle classes, therefore, all who had property to lose, remained with the Whigs ; but, on the other hand, the mere populace, who had nothing tangible, and to whom the subject was only a matter of speculation, readily yielded credence to the authority of able men ; and, with the ordinary influence which the character of the followers has upon that of the leaders, added a deeper tinge of democracy to the new creed.

One of the most able, and by far the most celebrated of the leaders of this new party, was John Horne, a man who, in addition to his great ability, brought honesty and intrepidity to the task he undertook.

The biographer of John Horne Tooke, after some prelude about the sword-cutler of Athens, and the fuller of Arpinum, reluctantly admits that his hero was the son of a poulterer in Cheapside. John Horne was the youngest and the favourite son ; and as his father was possessed of considerable wealth no expense was spared in his education. He was born in 1736, and having passed two years at Westminster school, and six at Eton, he, in 1755, became a member of St. John's college, Cambridge. Here he applied himself with some assiduity, and upon his examination for his degree, he obtained a subordinate place

among the classical honours. From a diligent student at Cambridge we find the grammarian and future demagogue suddenly transformed into an usher at a boarding-school at Blackheath. This situation was probably not the choice of young Horne; he doubtless found the drudgery and the monotony as great a penance as Johnson had found it before him; perhaps it was inflicted upon him by his father, to overcome the aversion which he had always displayed for his appointed profession, the church. If such was the father's object he was successful. His son consented to be ordained, and accepted a curacy in Kent; but his disgust for the duties of a clergyman, strengthened by an ague which he caught in their exercise, became unconquerable; he turned to the bar as the object of his earliest partiality, and became a member of the Inner Temple. This step excited the anger of his father; and the student's funds became at length so low that he was obliged to relinquish his favourite profession, make his peace at home, and return to the church. Upon this submission his father purchased for him the living of New Brentford, a piece of preferment then producing between 200*l.* and 300*l.* a year, and which Horne continued to enjoy for eleven years. While he retained this situation, he appears to have faithfully fulfilled the duties of a parish priest; he was the

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friend, the adviser, and the physician of his flock ; he appeared to have overcome his restless spirit, and to have reconciled himself to the monotony of his station ; seldom enjoying any other excitement than could be gained from a game at ombre or whist. He was orthodox in his doctrines, and plain in his discourses ; he could see no defect in the hierarchy, or merit in a dissenter ; except in his studious habits and profound philological erudition, he had nothing to distinguish him from the ordinary mass of the body to which he belonged.

The proceedings against Wilkes, and the national enthusiasm which they awakened, aroused all those turbulent passions which had so long been chastened into silence in the breast of the pastor of New Brentford. The Middlesex election brought the scene before his eyes, and the actors to his own door. The temptation could be no longer resisted. Squibs, puns, paragraphs, letters, essays, flowed with ceaseless rapidity from his pen, and were readily printed by the London newspapers. As he proceeded he grew more ardent in the cause ; he published a violent pamphlet, in which he avowed himself a candidate for the honours of the pillory, and invoked the vengeance of the ministry. “Even I, my countrymen,” he writes, “who now address you—I, who am at present blessed with peace, with happiness, with inde-

pendence, a fair character, and an easy fortune, am, at this moment, forfeiting them all. Soon must I be beggared, vilified, imprisoned. The hounds of power will be unkennelled and laid upon the scent. They will track out, diligently, my footsteps from my very cradle. And if I should be found once to have set my foot awry, it is enough—instant they open on me. My private faults shall justify their public infamy; and the follies of my youth be pleaded in defence of their riper villany. Spirit of Hampden, Russell, Sydney, animate my countrymen! I invoke not your assistance for myself, for I indeed was born a freeman.”

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The prosecution thus eagerly courted did not follow; perhaps the boldness of the challenge prevented its acceptance; or, which is more probable, the Tories were unwilling to make the popular insinuations against the Princess of Wales a subject of discussion in a court of justice. Horne had become acquainted with Wilkes during a residence upon the continent, whither he went as tutor to the son of a neighbouring gentleman. Although the treatment he received from the outlawed patriot was not such as to give him great confidence either in his honesty or his friendship, he continued to correspond with him; and imprudently poured forth, in these letters, sentiments which were buried at other times, and which were probably heightened to suit the taste of the libertine exile. Upon the Westminster election

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Horne broke all the bounds of clerical decorum ; he canvassed the county on horseback, opened inns at Brentford at his own expense, appeared upon the hustings, and attached his name to a virulent printed attack upon one of the ministerial candidates. In the subsequent contest with the house of commons he was no less conspicuous ; he was the author of many of the most violent of the addresses which were now transmitted to the throne ; he published, in the Public Advertiser, an account of the interview between the London remonstrants and the king, concluding with the remark, upon the king's turning to his courtiers at the conclusion of the interview and laughing, that " Nero fiddled whilst Rome was burning." It was Horne, also, who drew up the address, remonstrance, and petition from the London common-council ; and it is said that he also composed the reply made by the Lord Mayor Beckford to the sovereign's answer.

In 1769, the party of which Horne was so prominent a member, found themselves strong enough to attempt the establishment of a society which should represent their opinions. Alderman Townshend and Horne were the founders of this association, which was called the Society for Supporting the Bill of Rights. A list of the early members presents us with the names of the most conspicuous members of the new party. These were Sir John Bernard, Sir

Francis Blake Delaval; Sir Joseph Mawbey, Mr. Sergeant Glynn, Lord Mountmorris, Dr. Wilson, John Horne, Mr. Sergeant Adair, Aldermen Wilkes, Sawbridge, Oliver, and Townshend, Robert Morris, and William Tooke. The ostensible object of the institution of this society was the support and defence of all objects of ministerial oppression. Thus, they encouraged the printers to publish the parliamentary debates; and, as we have already seen, they collected and expended immense sums upon John Wilkes. But their political tenets most clearly appear in the terms of the test they proposed to candidates who sought their recommendation. This test required them to promise that they would consent to no supplies without a previous redress of grievances; that they would promote a law subjecting each candidate to an oath against having used bribery or any other illegal means of compassing his election; that they should endeavour to obtain a full and equal representation of the people in parliament; that they should restore annual parliaments, promote a pension and place bill, disqualifying all pensioners or placemen for a seat in parliament; impeach the ministers, vindicate the rights of juries, expunge all records of the arbitrary proceedings of the commons, redress the grievances of Ireland, and restore the right of taxation to America.*

* Stephen's Life of Horne Tooke.

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In this manifesto matters of the most enduring and fundamental importance are mingled with others which possessed only a temporary interest. The substantive part of this party confession of faith is the declaration in favour of the universal right of representation, annual parliaments, and the exclusion of the influence of the crown. In the theory of the British constitution, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are equally mixed; but in practice no such equality has ever been discerned. They are antagonist principles, which can never coexist in equal and active operation. When the monarchical principle fell the aristocratical succeeded; it was now in full domination. The Whigs were prepared to reduce its power, and to throw weight into the democratic scale, to balance, with nicety, the two principles; but not to give the preponderance to democracy. The new party denied the expediency or practicability of this, and while they assisted the Whigs to spoil the aristocracy, they called upon them to join them in building up the power of the populace.

The Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights was broken up, by the pretensions of Wilkes, who, caring nothing for the political objects of the founders of the Society, had succeeded in getting a number of his own creatures elected into it, and had rendered a political association a mere vehicle for obtaining subscriptions for his use. Horne and his party then left

it; the contest between Wilkes and Horne, which so much amused the public, ensued; and a society called the Constitutional Society, from which the Wilkites were excluded, succeeded it.

The appearance of this new party was of considerable benefit to the Whigs. The extreme tenets they professed stimulated the populace to action, while the boldness with which they attacked existing institutions, and the startling reforms which they proposed, drew general attention to these subjects, awakened a spirit of inquiry, accustomed the public mind to their discussion, and habituated the educated classes to look with less suspicion upon the more moderate propositions of the Whigs.

This increase of popular strength occasioned a considerable alteration in the tactics of the Whigs. Corruption was no longer necessary to their party, and they disclaimed it; the electors were no longer so universally devoted to their landlords; many of them had begun to think, and the Whigs were sure of their assistance. Henceforward, therefore, we find a great portion of the Whigs strenuous in behalf of short parliaments, and eager to extend the popular influence over the elections so far as that could be effected without danger to the monarchical forms of the constitution.

In the session of 1771, Alderman Sawbridge moved for leave to bring in a bill for shortening the duration of parliaments, a measure which, in the time

CHAP. of Sir Robert Walpole, was the favourite proposition
 VIII. of the Tories ; but which now met with so little fa-
 A. D. 1771 vour from them that the ministers thought it unneces-
 to 1774. sary to reply to the speeches of its supporters, and
 crushed it at once by their majority.* In the session
 of 1772 the same motion was made with the same
 success, and repeated in 1774, but the Tories always
 cleared their gallery, and then put an end to further
 discussion by a division. This parliament could
 never be brought to entertain the question, and a
 difference of opinion among the Whigs, some of whom
 thought that parliaments should be triennial, and
 others that they should be annual, prevented their
 pushing the question with that unity which can alone
 secure success.

On the subject of America the Whigs were more
 unanimous, but not more successful. The Tories, true
 to no general system of policy, at one time sought to
 appease the colonists by partial and ill-timed conces-
 sions, and at others to bear down opposition by violent
 and exasperating enactments. The Whigs always
 attempted to extend the former so as to render them
 efficacious, and opposed the latter as ineffectual and

* The majority was 105 to 54. of the near conclusion of the
 Many Whigs, among whom was session.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xvii., col.
 Mr Cavendish, opposed the mo- 182.
 tion as unreasonable, on account

unjust. A motion made in the session of 1774, for a repeal of the Tea-duty bill, produced Mr. Burke's celebrated speech on American taxation, one of the most brilliant pieces of oratory heard in our senate, or recorded in our literature. But the power of the minister continued unabated, and even Burke addressed an indifferent or impatient audience.

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At the end of the session of 1774 ministers found that the hostile measures they had pursued with regard to America had produced these effects. Affairs there stood in a very precarious condition; and the news of some violent attempt was daily to be expected. The civil list also was again become deeply in debt; and the distresses of the lower part of the household, from the withholding of their wages, were become so notorious, and so much spoken of, that it seemed disgraceful to the nation as well as grievous to the sovereign. It would be necessary, therefore, in the ensuing session to demand a large sum of money for the discharge of the standing debt, and a yearly addition to the civil list for the future. At the end of the session this parliament would expire, and the minister considered that it would be highly impolitic to send their friends to their constituents, burdened with the odium of the grant to the civil list, and of the measures which were producing such excitement in America. It was decided, therefore, that the parliament should be at once dissolved.

CHAP. Timely notice was given to the Tories, who thus had
VIII. time to make their canvass, and secure their elections,

A. D. 1771 while the Whigs derived their first information from
to 1774. the Gazette. Parliament was dissolved on the 30th
of September, and a new one was summoned to meet
on the 29th of November.

CHAPTER IX.

Elections to the new parliament—Disputes with America—A contest between Whiggism and Toryism—Opinion of the Earl of Chatham—Biographical anecdotes of Charles Fox—American declaration of independence—Contests between the parties upon the American war—Lord North's propositions.

THE attempt now made by the Tories, to take the electors by surprise, had been foreseen by Junius, and anticipated in his dedication of the collected edition of his letters. It was, nevertheless, to a considerable extent successful; corruption and influence obtained the re-election of a great majority of the Tory county members; and the number of treasury boroughs prevented any apprehension in the minister of finding himself in a minority in the new par-

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liament.* The commencement of the session discovered that the Tories had calculated accurately. In the division upon the address the numbers were 264 to 73, a division that was decisive as to the character of the new parliament.†

The decision of this house upon the Middlesex election case, the great source of inquietude to the former house, agreed with that of their predecessors. Wilkes was again returned member for Middlesex. The people, who seemed to look upon him as one whom they had created, and to love him as a son, had paid his enormous debts, rendered him easy in his circumstances, made him Lord Mayor of London, and now sent him again into parliament triumphant over all his enemies. His first attempt was to obtain

* The elections to this parliament present us with early instances of the practice of exacting pledges from the candidates. At a meeting of the freeholders of Middlesex, Mr. Wilkes and Sergeant Glynn signed a paper, engaging their utmost endeavours to promote bills for the shortening the duration of parliaments, for the exclusion of placemen and pensioners from the house of commons, for a more fair and equal representation of the people, for vindicating the injured rights of the

freeholders of that county, and, through them, of all the electors of the kingdom ; and for repealing the recent acts which had been passed to control the spirit of resistance in America. Similar tests were proposed and subscribed in London and some other populous constituencies ; but the leaders of the Whigs disclaimed all such obligations as derogatory to their characters as senators, and restrictive of their rights as men.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xviii., col. 45.

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that the resolution which had declared him incapable to sit in the last parliament should be expunged from the journals. His persecutions and his experience had moderated his violence, and even Gibbon, who sat in this parliament, could say that, upon this occasion, he spoke well, and with temper. A majority, however, of 239 against 171 rejected his motion.

The grand feature in the proceedings of this parliament were the debates upon the subject of the insurrection in America. This question now became, and, while the contest lasted, continued, the touchstone of the parties, and the point upon which they exerted all their energies. Early in the first session papers were laid before parliament which first discovered to the nation the magnitude and imminence of the danger. It had been previously represented by the minister as a mere popular outbreak at Boston ; it was now seen in its true character, as the stern and desperate resolve of an united people.

On the next day the Earl of Chatham commenced the attack upon the ministerial policy, with a motion for an address to the king, to withdraw the troops from Boston. The decrepit statesman appeared inspired with the fervour of his youth, as he combated again in the cause of liberty. He dwelt with anxiety upon the importance of the contest into which the country had been plunged, and, with indignation,

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upon the injustice of the measures which had provoked it. “Resistance to your acts,” he said, “was necessary as it was just ; and your vain declarations of the omnipotence of parliament, and your imperious doctrines of the necessity of submission, will be found equally impotent to convince or to enslave your fellow-subjects in America ; who feel that tyranny, whether ambitioned by an individual part of the legislature, or the bodies who compose it, is equally intolerable to British subjects.

“This resistance to your arbitrary system of taxation might have been foreseen ; it was obvious, from the nature of things and of mankind ; and above all from the Whiggish spirit flourishing in that country. The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed loans, benevolences, and ship money, in England ; the same spirit which called all England on its legs, and, by the Bill of Rights, vindicated the English constitution ; the same spirit which established the great fundamental, essential maxim of your liberties—*that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent.*

“This glorious spirit of Whiggism animates three millions in America, who prefer poverty with liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence ; and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen. What shall oppose this spirit, aided by the congenial flame glowing in the breasts of every Whig in Eng-

land, to the amount, I hope, of double the American numbers? Ireland they have to a man. In that country, joined as it is with the cause of the colonies, and placed at their head, the distinction I contend for is, and must be, observed. This country superintends and controls their trade and navigation; but they tax themselves; and this distinction between external and internal control is sacred and insurmountable. It is involved in the abstract nature of things. Property is private, individual, absolute. Trade is an extended and complicated consideration; it reaches as far as ships can sail or winds can blow; it is a great and various machine. To regulate the numberless movements of its several parts, and combine them into effect for the good of the whole, requires the superintendence, wisdom, and energy of the supreme power in the empire. But this supreme power has no effect towards internal taxation, for it does not exist in that relation; there is no such thing—no such idea in this constitution, as a supreme power operating upon property. Let this distinction, then, remain for ever ascertained. Taxation is theirs—commercial regulation is ours. As an American I could recognise to England her supreme right of regulating commerce and navigation; as an Englishman, by birth and principle, I recognise to the Americans their supreme unalienable right in their property, a right which they are justified in the defence

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of to the last extremity. To maintain this principle is the common cause of the Whigs on the other side of the Atlantic and on this. ‘’Tis liberty to liberty engaged.’ That they will defend themselves, their families and their country. In this great cause they are immovably allied; ’tis the alliance of God and nature—immutable, eternal—fixed as the firmament of heaven.”*

Thus was the contest upon this all-absorbing question recommenced in the new parliament. Lord Chatham soon after produced his promised project of conciliation. This measure declared the absolute dependence of the colonies upon the British parliament, and its right of legislation in all matters touching the general weal of the whole dominion of the imperial crown of Great Britain, and in regulating navigation and trade throughout the complicated system of British commerce. Having made this declaration, it proposed to enact that no tax or charge for his majesty’s revenue should be levied from British freemen in America, without common consent by act of provincial assembly there, duly convened for that purpose.

Having thus conceded the great point in issue, the bill proposed to restrain the powers of the American admiralty courts within their ancient limits, to

* Parl. Hist., vol. xviii., col. 154.

restore the trial by jury wherever it had been abolished, to take away the power of removing American criminals to England for trial, and to suspend the acts passed by the last parliament for stopping the port of Boston, altering the charter of Massachusetts Bay, regulating the government of Quebec, and providing for the quartering of soldiers. These acts were to be repealed from the day that the recognition of the supreme legislative authority and superintending power of parliament should be made on the part of the colonies. The judges were to hold their commissions, as in England, *quamdiu se bene gesserint*, and the charters of the respective colonies were declared inviolable. The bill concluded, "So shall true reconciliation avert impending calamities, and this most solemn national accord between Great Britain and her colonies, stand an everlasting monument of clemency and magnanimity in the benignant father of his people, of wisdom and moderation in this great nation, famed for humanity as for valour, and of fidelity and grateful affection from our brave and loyal colonies to their parent kingdom, which will ever protect and cherish them."*

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Such was the Whig proposition of conciliation with America; a proposition introduced by Chatham, and supported by Lyttelton, Shelburne, Camden, Richmond, Manchester, and Temple; which only secured

* Parl. Hist., vol. xviii., col. 203.

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to British subjects in America rights that were already enjoyed by every British subject in England. But the Tories would not for a moment listen to it. The Earl of Sandwich, angry that any one should interfere with the ministerial mismanagement, immediately moved that the bill be rejected. The Duke of Grafton, Earl Gower, and the Earl of Hillsborough enunciated Toryism and called for war. No one among the Tories, and scarcely any one among the Whigs, appears to have entertained any suspicion of the power of the Americans. The Tories always spoke of them with the greatest contempt. In the debate upon the address to the king to have recourse to active measures to put down the rebellion, Colonel Grant said he had served in America, and knew the Americans well; he was certain they would not fight. They would never dare to face an English army, and did not possess any of the qualifications necessary to make a good soldier. He proceeded to amuse the house by ridiculing their dialect, their religious observances, and their customs, and his audience appeared highly to relish his powers of mimicry. Thus did the Tories animate each other against their fellow-subjects by mutual exhortations that their victims were incapable of resistance. They prevailed upon the division by a majority of 61 to 32, and their descendants at this day feel the effects of their success—they feel it in the existence of a powerful rival,

instead of a grateful dependant and an hereditary burden of a hundred millions of national debt.

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In the same session, Lord North brought forward a ministerial scheme of conciliation. This consisted of a resolution, that whenever any one of the colonies should propose to make provision, according to its circumstances, for contributing its proportion to the common defence, and should engage to make provision, also, for the support of the civil government and the administration of justice, if such proposal should be approved by his majesty and the two houses of parliament, it will be proper to forbear to levy any duty, tax, or assessment in such colony. This proposition was opposed by the Whigs as futile and treacherous, and its effect, for it was of course carried, verified their judgment. The Americans rightly judged that it merely proposed to throw upon the colonial assemblies the odium of collecting a revenue to be fixed in its amount by the British legislature. It was rather an acknowledgment of weakness than an overture of peace, and met with the contempt such indecisive measures deserve.*

In the session of 1775, an attempt was made in the commons similar to that which had already failed in the lords. Burke, the acknowledged leader of the Whigs in that assembly, brought forward the subject,

* Parl. Hist., vol. xviii., col. 320. Hinton's Hist. of the United States.

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and prefaced a string of resolutions with one of his own bursts of genuine eloquence. But eloquence was of little use before a tribunal which had already prejudged the question, and as the house had been carefully cleared of strangers before the debate was suffered to commence, the Whigs had not even the satisfaction of feeling that they were appealing from their opponents to their constituents. The Tories repeated their general arguments on the supremacy of the British parliament, and in favour of the policy and necessity of American taxation. Charles Jenkinson cited the practice of the French in their *Pais d'états* as illustrative of the true principle of taxation. There, though the people seemed to grant, yet, in reality, the mode alone of raising the tax was left to the province, the amount was fixed by the crown. That people, he said, had always been satisfied with this reputed freedom, except in one instance, and in that the interference of an army had quickly subdued all discontent. Lord Frederick Campbell thought any minister ought to be impeached who suffered the grant of any sort of revenue from the colonies to the crown. Other speakers followed in a similar strain, and the previous question was carried by a majority of 270 to 78.

The Whigs were unfortunately not supported upon this question by the people. The city of London, indeed, whose merchants felt the effects of the Tory

policy in the destruction of their trade, was earnest in the cause, and the corporations of other large commercial cities and towns followed the example. Addresses were presented to Lord Chatham and Mr. Burke, thanking them for their exertions and imploring their perseverance, but the feeling was by no means general. It did not, as in the case of Wilkes, pervade all classes, or challenge the national sympathy. Many who, in such a cause, would have deemed resistance patriotism in England, thought it rebellion in America. It is seldom that tyrants can discern the iniquity of tyranny. The English nation were in this instance the tyrants.*

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The adoption of the American cause, as their chief topic of opposition, is highly honourable to the Whigs of this period. Any domestic reform would have been far more popular, would have offered them a far better prospect of restoration to power, and none

* In the Declaration of Independence, it is said, "We have warned our British brethren, from time to time, of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them, by the ties of our

common kindred, to disavow these usurpations which would inevitably interrupt our connexions and correspondence. They, too, have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends."

CHAP. could have been more distasteful to the sovereign.
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The cause of the American was founded upon a principle too extensive to be estimated by a multitude, too liberal to be tolerated by a Tory king. The doctrine of an universal and inalienable right to freedom, a doctrine which even the versatile Halifax could not renounce when he abandoned his party—which he proclaimed to his startled colleagues, even in the cabinet of Charles the Second,* was a fundamental principle in the Whig creed, transmitted to the present Whigs from the age of Hampden and Russell, ever cherished and upheld by the thinking members of that party, disregarded or denied only by those who had assumed the name without imbibing the spirit of Whiggism. This principle of their party called upon the Whigs of the present day to stand forward as opposers of the injustice sought to be inflicted upon the Americans. Unmindful of the frowns of royalty, of the weakness of their numbers, of the loss of their popularity, they obeyed. They kept their party faith.

The discussion of this question, calling forth appeals to the first principles of liberty, occurred seasonably to renovate the philosophical character of Whiggism, and proposed a theme which might well attract and develop the highest order of intellect. In these party battles, as they are now dimly seen, we

* See vol. i., p. 339.

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can discern the outlines of the form of many a formidable combatant, and among them, one whose prowess, and whose deeds become shortly better defined, who gained his loftiest triumphs before the public eye, and whose fame depends upon records which all may peruse. Burke has been lately the chief figure in our panorama of the house of commons, he must now submit to divide our admiration with Charles Fox.

Charles James Fox was born on the 24th of January, 1749, the third son of that Henry Fox, whose career we have already traced from its commencement, under Sir Robert Walpole, to its termination in the house of peers. When but nine years old, Charles was sent to Eton, where it is said he gave early promise of his future eminence. When he had been about five years at this school, his father, whose fondness for him was excessive, carried him, during his holidays, first to Paris and then to Spa. Lord Holland was himself addicted to play, and he incautiously suffered his son to participate in his amusements. The love of gaming thus early implanted in the boy became a passion in the man, the source of continual unhappiness, and the most serious impediment to his honourable ambition. From Eton, he was removed to Oxford, where he was placed at Hertford college, under the tuition of Dr. Newcome afterwards primate of Ireland. Here the future

CHAP. statesman was distinguished by the closeness of his
IX. application as much as by the power of his intellect.
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to 1778. “Application like yours,” said his tutor, in a letter
which Fox was in after life proud to exhibit, “re-
quires some intermission ; and you are the only per-
son with whom I have ever had connexion to whom
I could say this.” He acquired at Oxford an ex-
tensive and intimate acquaintance with the Greek
and Roman writers, an acquaintance, which during
the strife and turmoil in which his manhood was
passed, he never suffered to be interrupted, and
which formed his delight in his declining days.*
For the mathematics he had little taste. Notwith-
standing the exertions of his tutor, he brought away
little of that kind of learning from Oxford, and al-
though he sometimes lamented he never remedied
his deficiency.

In the autumn of 1766, Fox quitted Oxford, and
accompanied his father and mother to the south of
Europe, where Lord Holland had been advised to
pass the winter, on account of his health. He
remained with them at Naples during the winter,
and was left by them in Italy upon their return to
England in the ensuing spring. During his re-

* There are some very inter- printed in the Appendix to Mr.
esting letters from Mr. Fox to Trotter’s Memoirs of the Latter
Mr. Trotter, containing criticisms Years of Charles James Fox.”
upon many of the ancient writers

sidence in Italy, Fox acquired proficiency in the language and partiality for its literature; he indulged freely in pleasure, but, unlike the generality of those who devote their nights to dissipation, he could give the morning to study. A visit to Voltaire at Fernay, and a fondness for private theatricals, in which he appears to have been more sanguine than successful, are the only other circumstances which are recorded of his residence abroad.

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Fox returned to England in August, 1768, and although not of age, he took his seat in the house of commons for Midhurst, for which borough he had been elected in his absence. Lord Holland had, as we have already seen, gradually lapsed into Toryism. Young Fox had been educated in his father's adopted creed, and one of his earliest productions was a copy of French verses written in 1764, full of invective against Pitt, and eulogy of the Earl of Bute. Charles Fox, therefore, entered the house of commons as a Tory, and immediately proclaimed his presence, by a speech full of insolence and zeal against Wilkes, and in favour of Colonel Luttrell's claim to the representation of Middlesex. After this maiden essay, Fox returned to Paris and the gaming table, and we hear little of him until in February, 1770, when he was retained by the ministry with the place of junior lord of the admiralty. While sitting upon the treasury benches, Fox was,

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by no means moderate in his Toryism. He de-
claimed in favour of Lord Mansfield, ridiculed the
demands of the people, opposed the Nullum Tempus
act, spoke and voted against Mr. Grenville's bill for
deciding election cases, and was the most energetic
and violent man of the party in his persecution of
printers and anti-ministerial writers. But although
the young senator thus endeavoured, with fiery zeal,
to propagate the political faith of his childhood, he
was not a submissive subordinate. In 1772, he
opposed the Royal Marriage bill, by which the Tory
ministry surrendered to George III. tyrannical power
over all his relations. The king could not think
this opposition to his own measure expiated by less
than a twelvemonth's exclusion from office, but not
even this punishment could bring him to the re-
quisite sense of ministerial discipline. Early in
1774, Woodfall was brought to the bar of the house
of commons to answer for the publication of a libel
upon the speaker, written by Horne Tooke. It was
moved that he should be taken into the custody of
the sergent-at-arms, and the house, unwilling to
engage in a new contest with the press, were about
to acquiesce. But Fox was warm and independent
in his zeal : without communicating with Lord North,
he moved, as an amendment, that Woodfall be com-
mitted to Newgate ; the minister was compelled to
support his colleague, and found himself in the mi-

nority. Lord North, incensed at the disgrace, punished the temerity which caused it, by dismissing Fox from his office.*

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This was the decisive moment of his life; but it was a moment for which he had been some time prepared. Before his breach with Lord North, Fox had formed an intimate acquaintance with Burke, and, like all that great man's contemporaries, had been taken captive by his genius. His admiration of the Whig champion led him to re-examine the grounds of their political opposition. Burke was his companion in the inquiry; he traced, with the finger of philosophy, the pervading principle of the apparently confused and entangled state of politics and parties. He showed that the dangerous engines which had been devised and employed by Sir Robert Walpole, and for which Fox probably entertained an hereditary respect, had long since been seized by the party which Walpole defeated; that corruption and influence were now united against the national interest; and that Toryism, under the house of Brunswick, had lost nothing but its sincerity. From the master's

* The manner of this dismissal was very unceremonious. While Fox was actually engaged in conversation with Lord North on indifferent subjects, in the house of commons, the following laconic card was delivered to him by one of the door keepers—"His majesty has thought proper to order a new commission of treasury to be made out, in which I do not see your name."—*North*.

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example and instructions the young senator caught more elevated ideas of public principle than had been entertained by the statesmen of the last generation ; and he learned the necessity of party connexions, in a mixed government, to counterbalance the influence of the executive, to watch the conduct of every minister, and to preserve a due balance of power between the crown and the people. The masculine mind of Charles Fox grasped and examined the argument thus submitted to it ; the scales fell from his eyes, and he became in principles, a Whig.

No sooner had Fox taken his seat upon the same bench with Burke, Barrè, Dunning, and Saville, than a new era in his existence appeared to have opened ; he found himself in the element for which he had been designed ; his spirit shook off the early fetters by which she had been limited, and spread forth her pinions for a bolder flight. No sooner had he taken the free principles of Whiggism for his topics and his creed than, in the words of Gibbon, “ he discovered powers for regular debate which neither his friends hoped nor his enemies dreaded.”

It had been injustice to the memory of this great man had we introduced him into every scene of party contest which occurred after his entrance into the house of commons. In the little-esteemed retainer of a minister, whose speeches were never thought more than clever, whose opposition was not always

considered worthy of notice by the Whigs, and whose support was not always deemed valuable by the Tories, we could recognise nothing of the Charles Fox whom history honours. In those cramped limbs, swathed in the bandages of Toryism, we see no promise of the thews and muscle of the mighty party chief; in those academical speeches we hear no promise of the voice which was heard above the turmoil of party strife, which cheered on a little band of followers to attack the power of a minister and the prejudices of a nation, and sounded throughout Europe the tocsin of public liberty. The political career of Charles Fox, as he is known to posterity, commences from the time when he placed himself among the friends of freedom and America.

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The eloquence of Fox, as it appeared at its maturity in the house of commons, cannot be better described than in the words of Sir James Macintosh, who, during the last fifteen years of his life, enjoyed his friendship. "Everywhere natural," writes Sir James, "he carried into public something of that simple and negligent exterior which belonged to him in private. When he began to speak a common observer might have thought him awkward, and even a consummate judge could only have been struck with the exquisite justice of his ideas, and the transparent simplicity of his manners. But no sooner had he spoken for some time than he was changed

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into another being ; he forgot himself and every thing around him ; he thought only of his subject. His genius warmed and kindled as he went on ; he darted fire into his audience. Torrents of impetuous and irresistible eloquence swept along their feelings and conviction. He certainly possessed, above all moderns, that union of reason, simplicity and vehemence, which formed the prince of orators. He was the most Demosthenean speaker since the days of Demosthenes. ‘I knew him,’ says Mr. Burke, in a pamphlet written after their unhappy difference, ‘when he was nineteen ; since which time he has risen, by slow degrees, to be the most brilliant and accomplished debater the world ever saw.’”*

Having once embraced the principles of freedom, Fox clung to them under every circumstance ; his was not a mind to be frightened from its convictions, to

* Dr. Parr’s Collection of Characters of Charles James Fox. In his own essay upon the same subject, Dr. Parr finds great fault with this testimony of Mr. Burke, and attributes his choice of the term debater to envy. I am unwilling to admit that Edmund Burke could feel envious of any man, still less of his early friend and pupil. The word so obnoxious to Dr. Parr was probably used in an extensive sense, and

did not, as Burke employed it, convey a denial of the right of Fox to be considered an orator. A good debater, in the ordinary acceptance of that term, implies a man who speaks with shrewdness and ready tact, skilfully adapting his language to the temper and prejudices of his audience. The man who adds “brilliancy” to these qualities is an eloquent orator.

start at some unexpected effect, and abandon the advocacy of the general cause ; it was too philosophical to become the dupe of the common fallacy which condemns a principle or an institution, by citing instances of its abuse. The beautiful simplicity of his character extended to his intellect ; he might have required the analytical powers of Burke to accompany him in his search for political truth ; but having found it he needed no other guide thenceforward ; his course was clear, and well defined ; he pursued it with the obedience of a child, with the strength and energy of a giant.

In the session of 1774, Fox joined the Whigs in their spirited but unsuccessful opposition to the Boston Port and Massachusetts Bay bills, and although little record remains of his speeches, his name appears in every attack made upon the ministerial American policy. In the debate upon the address in the session of 1775, he moved the amendment, and it was his speech upon this occasion that excited the astonishment of Edward Gibbon, and called forth the estimate of his ability which has been already quoted.*

* For this sketch of the early life of Mr. Fox I am chiefly indebted to an article in the Supplement to the Encyclopedia Britannica. The author manifestly had access to private correspondence and authentic papers ; and al-

though he has probably withheld much that may hereafter meet the public eye, he gives a most accurate, although a concise, view of the character, principles, and transactions of Mr. Fox's public life.

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The first occasion upon which Fox appeared as a leader of the Whigs, was upon a motion which he made in the session of 1775, for an account of the expense of the army in America. The return he moved for would, he said, open an astonishing scene of ministerial delusion, held out by the pretended estimate laid before the house a few days ago. It would bring the staff into the full glare of day which had been hitherto artfully held back ; it would show, that the expense of the ordnance this year had exceeded any one of the Duke of Marlborough's campaigns, while in the midst of repeated victories he was immortalizing the British name, and it would convince the greatest court infidels of the temerity of the minister who, to the very last day of the session, insisted and declared that the military service in every branch and under every description, was amply provided for ; that all his arrangements were made, and who thus durst, in the bare article of the ordnance alone, incur a debt of £240,000. He said it would be a farce to sit any longer in that house if accounts of this nature were refused ; that the motion was parliamentary ; that it would convey no secret to the enemy ; and within his own knowledge or reading, he never heard of an instance where such information was denied, unless in instances where it was impossible to comply with them ; such as the accounts desired not having been received, or

officially made up. Aware of this, he would be perfectly satisfied with copies of those already come to hand, or of those gross computations made by estimate, and wait with pleasure for the remainder, till the ministry could venture to face the public and an ensured majority with the disgraceful contents.*

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Thomas Townshend, Burke, and Sir George Seville, all Whigs of experience and importance, were, this evening, led by an orator six and twenty years old, and who, at that early age, had fought his way to the foremost rank in each party successively. Lord North refused the returns demanded, and Jenkinson supported him in his refusal, a circumstance which gave the Whigs an opportunity they did not neglect, of taunting Lord North with the protection of his powerful friend. The motion was negatived without a division.

It would be tedious to enumerate, from the journals of the houses of parliament, the various motions by which the Tory policy was attacked. The determined stand of a small minority is an interesting object of contemplation, when we can trace every incident of the struggle, observe the weaker party gradually increasing, and mark the effect of their eloquence upon the public mind, until the mass becomes inoculated with their enthusiasm. But although Fox

* Parl. Hist. vol. xviii., col. 999.

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and Burke poured forth their eloquence upon this theme, their nightly invectives died within the walls of St. Stephen's. The Tories carefully closed the strangers' gallery, and, except when Burke put forth one of his finished orations through the press, the public knew no more of the debate than the newspaper writers could gather from the recollections of the members. The contests in the house, therefore, had little effect upon public opinion ; and the minister, who estimated the eloquence of a speaker by the number of his supporters, frequently returned to the most elaborate speeches of Burke and Fox no other reply than a division.

A curious instance of the anxiety of the Whig speakers to address the nation, occurred, in a debate upon the budget, in 1776. Upon this occasion the minister was about to set forth the resources of the kingdom, and the gallery was opened. The Whigs eagerly took advantage of the circumstance. Governor Johnson remarked that, the object in opening the gallery upon that one day was evidently to give the minister an opportunity of misrepresenting the usual arguments of the Whigs, and dispersing through the country his own uncontradicted statements. Fox made more ample use of the occasion. "He repeated," says the report, "the governor's observation respecting the opening of the gallery, asking if it was cooler and more conve-

nient for a crowd then than in January or February ; and asserted that the noble lord's speech of this day was the reverse of what he had repeatedly maintained in that house ; that it was a custom with the noble lord to contradict himself, but that he believed he might have prudence enough, with a tolerable share of preparation, to appear consistent for one day, and to tell the same story, however contradictory it might be to his usual argument, than which nothing could possibly be more opposite than his flattering description of our situation and ability to answer every want the turn of affairs was likely to occasion. He animadverted with some humour and great asperity, on the irregular conduct of the house respecting the opening of the gallery doors ; asserting that the public had a right to hear in what manner their representatives discharged their duty, and, that the gallery being open or shut should depend on the will of any one or two persons, was exceedingly unfair. He dwelt a considerable time on this point, and after declaring that he knew that the gallery had been opened on a whisper from the noble lord, when he was prepared to say any thing likely to produce a popular effect ; he asserted, that in his opinion, it was a breach of the constitution to prevent the public from hearing their proceedings. To the resolutions offered, he said, he should give his flat negative, and that, not because of any particular objections to the

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taxes proposed (although there might be a sufficient ground for urging many) but because he could not conscientiously agree to grant any money for so destructive, so ignoble a purpose, as the carrying on a war commenced unjustly and supported with no other view than to the extirpation of freedom, and the violation of every social comfort. This, he said, he conceived to be the strict line of conduct to be observed by a member of parliament; and to show that it was justifiable, he found himself necessitated to state the case of the American quarrel; for as strangers were admitted but for one day, it was necessary for him to repeat what he had often urged. This he acknowledged was rather out of order, but the noble lord must expect that the irregularity of his conduct would give rise to irregular debate.

“He then, in a very masterly manner, painted the quarrel with America as unjust, and the pursuance of the war as blood-thirsty and oppressive. He said it had been repeatedly urged that the Americans aimed at independence, and therefore ought not to be treated with until they laid down their arms: nothing could be more absurd than this sort of argument; it would have been just as ridiculous, if in our war with Louis XIV., who was said to aim at universal monarchy, we had declined to treat about the provinces of Alsace and Lorrain, on account of the report of his aiming at universal monarchy. After expressing his

opinion of the quarrel, and justifying America with that rapid flow of words, and that spirit and force of argument for which Mr. Fox was so distinguishable, he, at length, took notice of the resolutions offered by Lord North, and, in particular, spoke of the additional stamp on newspapers, which he urged as impolitic and unfair, while the ministerial brochures remained unstamped. He said he was far from being a friend to the licentiousness of the press, although he revered its freedom. The papers were intolerably licentious and injurious to the peace of private families; but the ministry had given rise to their insatiable rage, to their calumny, by suffering his hirelings to abuse the gentlemen in opposition, in terms of the most daring nature. He observed that the press, at this time, teemed with ministerial publications, many of which deserved the severest censure. That the pamphlet entitled, 'A History of the Thirteenth Parliament of Great Britain,' was a libel on that house, a libel of the most impudent kind, and yet it passed unnoticed. The minister had very triumphantly held up, as a proof of the freedom of the press, the information that twelve million and upwards of newspapers were stamped in one year; he begged him to consider that there were near twelve million of people in the kingdom: he, therefore, only proved, that every man in the realm might buy one paper in the course of the year. The

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minister told the house we were able to provide supplies equal to any necessity, and yet he was pursuing an inhuman, unnatural war, for the sake of a trifling and uncertain revenue. He, however, rather believed what he said in the house, when strangers were not in the gallery, than what had been so triumphantly stated by him this day; for he was sure his declaration of the people's wealth could only be proved by admitting the doctrine, that when by any tax, four shillings in the pound were taken from a subject he was greatly obliged, as he was, in fact, given the remaining sixteen shillings. After a great deal of very poignant matter, Mr. Fox sat down, repeating that he gave his flat negative to the resolutions proposed.”*

In the lords the Whigs were joined by the Duke of Grafton. In March, 1776, that nobleman, for the first time, informed the house that the Tea-duties bill had been carried in the cabinet against his opinion; and that he had always disapproved the measure; and he submitted to the house a proposition for conciliation which had the support of Lord Camden and the Whigs. With the duke's assistance, however, the Whigs could only obtain a minority of 31 peers; 91 voted with the ministers.

In November of the same year the Whigs resolved

* Parl. Hist., vol. xviii., col. 1327.

once more to record their protest against the Tory policy towards America. Lord John Cavendish brought forward a motion, that the house should resolve itself into a committee to consider of the revisal of all acts of parliament by which the Americans thought themselves aggrieved. A debate ensued, in which the principal speakers on each side took part, and, upon a division, the numbers were 47 to 109.*

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The declaration of independence was at this time known in England; that declaration which declared that the history of the then present king of Great Britain was a history of repeated injuries and usurpations; that he was a prince whose character, marked by every act which may define a tyrant, rendered him unfit to be the ruler of a free people; that the United Colonies were thenceforth independent states, and all political connexion between them and Great Britain was dissolved.†

Many of the English readers of this document were scandalized by the reflections upon the king; but almost every man felt himself insulted by the renunciation of the sovereignty of his country: the war also became expensive, and the money was borrowed; lucrative contracts, and advantageous loans could throw a ray of loyalty even into the city; po-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xviii., col. 1448. Hist. of the United States, vol. i.,

† See this document in Hinton's p. 355.

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pular excitement could not be sustained ; and those of the Whigs who still thought that America was just in her demands, and who foresaw that she would make good her independence, found their warnings unheeded, and their opposition useless. From this time a great number of this party, particularly of the Rockingham section, began to relax in their attendance upon parliament in either house, or rather to withdraw themselves wholly and avowedly upon all questions which related to America, and only to attend upon such matters of private bills or business in which they had some particular concern or interest. This conduct was so marked that some of the principal leaders of opposition, after attending the house of commons in the morning upon private business, as soon as a public question was introduced, took a formal leave of the speaker, and immediately withdrew.* The Whigs avowed that they despaired for their country.

From this state of indolent despondency, they were roused in the session of 1777, by the surrender of General Burgoyne, at Saratoga, and by the universal feeling of indignation and alarm which the intelligence spread throughout the country. The ill success of the war had awakened many to its injustice : as Wilkes remarked in the house of

* Annual Register. Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 1229.

commons, Washington and Gates were powerful apostles.* The country gentlemen, whom the minister had amused by the prospect of decreasing the land tax by means of an American revenue, were beginning to see the fallacy of their hopes; the Whigs returned to the charge, and the majorities of the minister perceptibly diminished.

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During the debates of this session, a contention took place between Lord Lyttelton and the Earl of Chatham, strikingly illustrative of the antiquity of the device by which deserters represent themselves as consistent, and their party as the deserters. Lord Lyttelton supported the ministers and their war, and Lord Chatham, in denouncing the war, took occasion to speak of certain Tory doctrines which had been promulgated in print by one of the bishops; declaring that they were the doctrines of Atterbury and Sacheverell, and, as a Whig, he could never endure them. Lord Lyttelton, who now found no fault with these doctrines, thought it incumbent upon him to show that they were perfectly reconcileable with the purest Whiggism. He avowed himself as genuine a Whig as the noble earl. He had been bred in the principles of Whiggism from his earliest days, and should persevere in them to the end. He loved Whiggish principles as much as he despised

* Parl. Hist., vol. xix., col. 806.

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those of anarchy and republicanism. But if the bare name of Whig was all that was meant, he disclaimed the name. If an impatience under every species of constitutional government, if a resistance to legal restraint, if the abetting of rebels, was the test of modern Whiggism, he begged leave to be excused as one not avowing or professing such doctrines. He would, indeed, much rather share the odium which had been unjustly cast upon another set of men, and be accounted a Tory in preference to a modern Whig.*

Here we have Lord Lyttelton using the well-worn expedient of drawing a distinction between ancient and modern Whiggism, and appealing from the new to the old Whigs. Lord Lyttelton was, in his own estimation, the true representative of the party of Russell and Essex ; the Earl of Chatham was, at least by implication, an anarchist and a republican. In the contests of the parties, we continually find public men sustaining themselves against the reproaches of their friends by similar assertions. Posterity has adjudged all these as apostates, some, perhaps, unjustly ; but the private motives of so many of them can be traced, that the remaining few are designated from this comparison.

Previously to the arrival of the news of General

* Parl. Hist., vol. xix., col. 491.

Burgoyne's surrender, Fox had extorted from the minister his consent to an inquiry into the state of the nation. The information gained by the opposition in conducting this inquiry, formed the basis of several motions directed against the ministerial policy, but they received little discussion: the ministers were now digesting a plan of their own, and shunned any altercation through which their schemes might become known. In February, 1778, Lord North laid this plan before the house, and introduced it with an elaborate speech. He declared that from the beginning he had been uniformly disposed to peace, that the coercive acts which he had made, were such as appeared to be necessary at the time, though, in the event, they had produced effects which he never intended. That, when he found they had not the effect he intended, he proposed a conciliatory proposition before the sword was drawn. "At that time, he thought," he said, "the terms of that proposition would form the happiest, most equitable, and most lasting bond of union between Great Britain and her colonies. By a variety of discussions a proposition that was originally clear and simple in itself, was made to appear so obscure as to go damned to America; so that the Congress conceived, or took occasion to represent it as a scheme for sowing divisions, and introducing taxation among them in a worse mode than the former, and accord-

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ingly rejected it. His idea never had been to draw any considerable revenue, either in that way or any other, from America: his idea was that they should contribute in a very low proportion to the expenses of this country. He had always known that American taxation could never produce a beneficial revenue. "He never," he said, had "proposed any tax on America; he found them already taxed; when he unfortunately, as he still must say, whatever use had been or might be made of the word, came into administration. His principle of policy was to have had as little discussion on these subjects as possible, but to keep the affairs of America out of parliament; that accordingly as he had not laid, so did he not think it advisable for him to repeal the tea tax, nor did he ever think of any particular means for enforcing it. One of the bills he proposed to move for was to quiet America upon the subject of taxation, and to remove all fears, real or pretended, of parliaments ever attempting to tax them again, and to take all exercise of the right again in future, so far as regarded revenue. That as to the other particulars in controversy, he observed, that the Americans desired a repeal of all the acts passed since 1763.

"That as to the late acts, such as the Massachusetts charter, the fishery, and the prohibitory bills, as they were the effects of the quarrel, they should cease,

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and that as to complaints of matters of a various nature, authority should be given to settle them to the satisfaction of America. On the whole, his concessions were from reason and propriety, not from necessity. That we were in a condition to carry on the war much longer. We might raise many more men, and had many more men ready to send; for the navy was never in greater strength, the revenue very little sunk, and that he could raise the supplies for the current year, as a little time would show. He submitted the whole, with regard to the propriety of his past and present conduct, to the judgment of the house.”*

A melancholy silence for some time succeeded to this speech. It had been heard with profound attention, but without a single mark of approbation from any part of the house. Astonishment and dejection had overclouded the whole assembly. The minister had declared that the sentiments he expressed that day had been those that he always entertained, but it is certain that none had understood him in that manner, and he had been represented to the nation at large as, next to the sovereign,† the

* Parl. Hist., vol. xix., col. 768.

† Instead of calling the war the war of parliament, or of the people, it was, by the king's friends, called

“the king's war,” “his majesty's favourite war.” The public prints teemed with assertions of this kind. Persons were employed on purpose to write books, pam-

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person in it the most tenacious of those parliamentary rights which he now proposed to resign, and the most remote from the submissions which he now proposed to make. It was generally, therefore, concluded, that something more extraordinary and alarming had happened than yet appeared, which was of force, to produce such an apparent exchange in measures, principles, and arguments. If the Whigs had then pressed him and joined with the war party, now disgusted and mortified, the minister would have been left in a minority. But their conduct was directly the reverse of this ; they took such a hearty part with the minister, only endeavouring to make such alterations in, or additions to the bills as might increase their eligibility, or to extend their effect, that no appearance of party remained, and some of his complaining friends vexatiously congratulated him on his new allies. These new allies, however, though they supported his measures, showed no mercy to his conduct.*

phlets, and daily publications, in order to disseminate these notions, and make them universal.—Lord Rockingham's Speech on Lord

North's Conciliatory Bill. Parl. Hist., vol. xix., col. 857.

* Annual Register.

CHAPTER X.

France concludes an alliance with America—Schism in the Whig party upon the subject of American independence—Death of Lord Chatham—Yorkshire petition—Burke's plan of economical reform—Motion for the repeal of the Septennial act—George Byng—Dissolution of parliament—Elections—The new parliament—Motion against the American war—Carried motion of censure upon the North administration—Dissolution of the North administration.

THE fears entertained by Lord North's hearers were unhappily too well founded. Measures of conciliation were now too late. France had concluded a treaty with our revolted subjects, and within a few weeks after the debate upon Lord North's propositions, avowed, through her ambassador, her new engagements.

The communication of this intelligence fell like a thunderbolt upon the nation. The Whigs looked back to the time when their party had been driven

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from the cabinet, and to the position which their country then held ; and they were stung to fury when they contemplated the state to which she was now reduced : her armies defeated, nay captured ; her resources drained, her dominions dismembered, unable to contend even with her revolted subjects, and obliged to bear the insults of her ancient national foe. The Tories met their reproaches with a sullen obstinacy ; and, however much they might murmur against their leaders in private, made it a point of honour to support them with their votes. Thus, when the French treaty with America was communicated to the house of commons, and the Whigs moved, as an amendment to the ministerial address, a clause praying his majesty to be graciously pleased to remove from his counsels those persons in whom his people, from past experience, could repose no confidence ; they were outnumbered by a majority of 150 ; and when Mr. Fox attempted to draw attention to past miscarriages, and moved a string of resolutions condemnatory of the Canada expedition, he found himself supported only by 44 votes. Such being the fate of his first resolution, Fox declared, in a tone of violent feeling, that he would not make another motion, and, tearing up the rest of the resolutions, he threw the fragments upon the floor, and left the house.

The Tories, with the irresolution which had cha-

racterized their policy throughout the American contest, were now as timorous as they had before been rash. Many of their speakers inadvertently betrayed the despondency which pervaded their counsels, and gave colour to the general idea that they were ready, if provided with a decent pretence, to terminate the war at any sacrifice. Among the Whigs a considerable difference of opinion prevailed upon this subject; a difference which soon after became an open schism. The majority of the Rockingham party, abandoning all hope of being able to overthrow Lord North's administration, observing the deplorable state to which the country had been reduced, and feeling that the men who could not maintain it in prosperity could never raise it from misfortune, wished to put an end to the series of national disgraces upon any terms. This section of the Whig party was desirous of acknowledging the independency of the colonies at once, rather than continue so severe a contest under incompetent leaders. Lord Chatham, on the other hand, repudiated the idea of England shrinking from a contest. The mighty spirit which had borne his country victorious through a crisis of equal danger, which had raised her once before from a posture of humiliation to the pinnacle of glory, and made her the arbiter of Europe, could not brook the ignominy of abandoning a civil contest at the command of a foreign enemy. This country was great enough to

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Thus did Lord Chatham spend his last days, and thus he died. On the 7th of April, 1778, the Duke of Richmond brought forward an address composed of a series of resolutions founded upon the information which had been obtained during the inquiry into the state of the nation. These resolutions recapitulated the events of the war, recounted the efforts that had been made, the treasures that had been expended, the blood that had been spilt, and the successes that had been obtained, and contrasted all these mighty efforts with the then state of the British cause in America, where our acquisitions were only two open

towns and a few islands on the coast, and our army and navy were alike reduced and inefficient. The conclusion drawn from these facts was, that “we see it impossible to carry on the present system of reducing America by force of arms.”

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Having thus stated their facts and drawn their conclusion, the Whigs proceeded to account for the calamities they deplored, and they found their origin in the delusive arguments and false representations of the ministers. The remedy they proposed was to withdraw from America those armies which were requisite to our security at home, to effectuate conciliation with the colonies on such terms as might preserve their good will, to restore the ancient morals of the kingdom and recover the true spirit and principles of the constitution by some sober, well-digested plan of public reformation, and to banish from the royal councils those ministers who had abused his majesty's confidence, tarnished the lustre of his crown, disgraced his arms, weakened his naval power, and dismembered his empire. The address concluded with an admonition to the sovereign to look back to the principles which had placed his family upon the throne; to call to mind the circumstances of his accession to the crown, when he took possession of an inheritance so full of glory, and of the trust of preserving it in all its lustre; and to put an end to the system which had so long prevailed in his court

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to his government, or make the name of Englishmen
that pride and distinction in which they had such
reason to glory in former happy times.

The Duke of Richmond enforced these resolutions by an able speech. Lord Chatham sat opposite to him, and listened with earnest attention. "He had come into the house," says an eyewitness of the well-remembered scene that followed, "leaning upon two friends, lapped up in flannel, pale and emaciated. Within his large wig, little more was to be seen than his aquiline nose and his penetrating eye. He looked like a dying man, yet never was seen a figure of more dignity: he appeared like a being of a superior species. He rose from his seat with slowness and difficulty, leaning on his crutches, and supported under each arm by two friends. He took one hand from his crutch and raised it, casting his eyes towards heaven, and said, 'I thank God, that I have been enabled to come this day to perform my duty, and to speak on a subject which has so deeply impressed my mind. I am old and infirm, have one foot, and more than one foot in the grave. I am risen from my bed to stand up in the cause of my country, perhaps never again to speak in this house.' The reverence, the attention, the

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stillness of the house was most affecting: if any one had dropped a handkerchief the noise would have been heard. At first, he spoke in a very low and feeble tone; but, as he grew warm, his voice rose, and he was as harmonious as ever; oratorical and affecting, perhaps more than at any other period, from his own situation, and from the importance of the subject on which he spoke. He gave the whole history of the American war; of all the measures to which he had objected; and all the evils which he had prophesied in consequence of them, adding at the end of each year, ‘and so it proved.’”*

“My lords,” continued he, “I rejoice that the grave has not closed upon me; that I am still alive to lift up my voice against the dismemberment of this ancient and most noble monarchy. Pressed down as I am by the hand of infirmity, I am little able to assist my country in this most perilous conjuncture; but, my lords, while I have sense and memory, I will never consent to deprive the royal offspring of the house of Brunswick, the heirs of the Princess Sophia, of their fairest inheritance. Where is the man that will dare to advise such a measure? My lords, his majesty succeeded to an empire as great in extent as its reputation was unsullied. Shall we tarnish the lustre of this nation by

* Seward's Anecdotes, vol. ii., p. 283. Parl. Hist., vol. xix., col. 1030.

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Lord Chatham sat down, and Earl Temple whispered to him, “You forgot to mention what I talked

of—shall I get up.” Lord Chatham replied, “No, no, I will do it by and by.”

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The Duke of Richmond rose to answer the speech of his friend, and re-stated the reasons which induced him reluctantly to dissent from so great an authority. While the duke spoke, Lord Chatham listened with attention and composure ; and when he sat down, he made an eager attempt to rise, as if labouring with some great idea : but his strength failed him. After two or three unsuccessful efforts to stand he fell backwards. He was instantly supported by those who were near him ; every one pressed round him with anxious solicitude. His youngest son, then a youth of seventeen, was behind the bar, and sprang forward to support his venerable parent. The house was immediately cleared, the debate adjourned, every consideration was absorbed in anxiety for the life of Lord Chatham. History has no nobler scene to show than that which now occupied the house of lords. The unswerving patriot whose long life had been devoted to his country, had striven to the last. The aristocracy of the land stood around ; even the brother of the sovereign thought himself honoured in being one of his supporters ; party enmities were remembered no more ; every other feeling was lost in admiration of the great spirit which seemed to be passing from among them. He was removed in a state of insen-

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sibility from the house. When the efforts of his physicians had restored him to some degree of animation, he expressed his wish to die among his wife and children, and was removed to Hayes. He lingered for a short time, but on the fourth day expired.

The event, although it could not have been unexpected, was deplored as a national calamity. The house of commons received the intelligence with deep sensation, and when it was proposed to honour the departed nobleman with a public funeral, and a monument in Westminster Abbey, orators from every part of the house came forward with their tribute of panegyric. It is highly honourable to the character of Lord North that he was the first of his party to support the motion to do honour to his illustrious enemy. Lord Chatham died poor; he had passed through offices in which large fortunes had been usually accumulated, refusing even the ordinary perquisites of his appointments. Upon one occasion, no less a sum than 20,000*l.* thus received, was applied by him to the public service, and this, at a time, when he was scarcely master of 1000*l.* The country had still, therefore, a debt of gratitude to discharge. The commons voted 20,000*l.* or the payment of his debts, and passed a bill, annexing a pension of 4000*l.* to the title. In the lords, this bill was opposed: eleven Tory peers attempted to intercept the gratitude, nay the

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justice, of the nation. The Duke of Chandos hinted that the bill was far from being a measure favoured by the king. The Lord Chancellor thought it a sufficient reason to reject the bill that it had not originated with the crown, and remarked, with a sneer, that he saw no reason to despond although the Earl of Chatham was no more. Lord Ravensworth could see no merit in the Earl of Chatham. He had, he said, come into parliament with him, and sat with him for fourteen years in the other house, and he doubtless thought that, if perseverance in a pursuit deserved success, he had himself by far the better right to a pension. The Earl of Abingdon, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Camden, the Earl of Radon, Lord Lyttelton, and the Earl of Shelburne, nobly defended their deceased friend. The bill passed by a majority of 31. Bathurst, Chandos, Paget, and the Archbishop of York protested—such public degradation will men welcome in order to pander to the passion of a king.

Lord Chatham's career has been too closely an object of our attention to require any detailed analysis of his character. He was a man formed for great occasions, possessed of the highest and noblest qualities, which were all subservient to the purest patriotism; he was calculated to wield a dictatorship with energy and success, and might have been trusted

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Thus, deprived of their champion, that section of the Whigs which refused to acknowledge American independence became weak. Lord Shelburne, Barrè, and Dunning, were the most conspicuous members of their party who adhered to this opinion. Burke and Fox, with the great body of the Whigs, wore the American uniform of buff and blue, and declared for peace and independence. On the day preceding that

of Lord Chatham's death, a motion upon this subject was made in the commons; Fox and Burke spoke in favour of the motion; but several of the Whigs, who had become enamoured of the Tory scheme of reconciliation, thought the proposition premature, and it was lost without a division. Fox, undaunted by defeat, returned nightly to the charge: whenever an address was proposed by ministers, whenever an opportunity for introducing the topic of America was given, he was found inveighing against the obstinacy, the absurdity, the imbecility of ministers; and calling for condign punishment for all the advisers of the present policy. His perseverance was not without its effect. In the session of 1779 he had nearly routed the ministerial ranks by a vote of censure upon Lord Sandwich. The country gentlemen, confounded by his eloquence, appeared to waver; and Lord North only recalled them to their allegiance by declaring that the result of a defeat must be a dissolution of the ministry.* Still the opposition gained considerably, the numbers being 170 to 204. These motions were incessant throughout the session, and the minority was no longer composed of from 40 to 50 members. In a committee of inquiry into the conduct of the American war, the Whigs divided—155 to 189, and 158 to 180, a sign that those who

* Annual Register.

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had urged ministers forward in their violent Tory policy would desert them with little ceremony, when that policy was found unsuccessful. In November of this year, the vehemence of Fox betrayed him into a personal quarrel with Mr. Adam, a gentleman who had just declared himself a ministerial convert, and who excused his apostacy by declaring that he saw men on the opposition bench far more incapable than those then in office. Fox complimented the ministers upon their success in procuring so able an advocate ; one who had told them he could not defend them on the ground of their own conduct, but that he would inform the world that the men who opposed them were more infamous and more disgraceful than themselves. " Were I a minister," he said, " and so addressed, I would instantly reply, ' Begone ! begone ! wretch ! who delighteth in libelling mankind ; confounding virtue and vice, and insulting the man thou pretendest to defend, by saying to his face that he certainly is infamous, but that there are others still more so.' "

Mr. Adam resented this attack, and the result was a hostile meeting. In this affair Mr. Fox behaved with great coolness ; and, although wounded by the first fire, concealed his hurt until a second shot had been exchanged and the quarrel settled.

While Fox was thus exhausting all his indignant declamation upon the minister and his underlings,

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Burke was pursuing a more laborious system of opposition. It was the universal cry of the Whigs both in the houses of parliament and without, that the ministerial majority was held together by bribery ; and that the parliamentary approbation of the American war formed no inconsiderable item in the list of its expences. It was said that the immense sums spent by the administration in the prosecution of this enterprise gave the minister an opportunity of sending into the house of commons a number of members who, as government contractors, must be devoted to his service. Several motions had been made, and severe speeches delivered against this class of members ; and the Whigs had even introduced a bill to exclude them from the house ; but Burke had employed himself upon a laborious and extensive task, which included this among other acknowledged existing evils, and had given promise of a scheme of economical reform, which, extending to every branch of the public service, should diminish the improper influence of the executive, and protect the interests of the people. This was a formidable instrument of opposition. If the cause which had rendered the house so unanimous for the American war was, that the country gentlemen had hoped to effect by it a reduction of the land tax, they would probably be equally willing to accept such a boon from a Whig as a Tory, and if it could be obtained by abandoning the war,

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would perhaps sacrifice it and its authors to their primary object.

On the 11th of December 1779, Mr. Burke gave notice of his plan. After some observations upon the means he conceived were used to prevent him from engaging the attention of the house to this subject, he said, “a general sense prevails of the profusion with which all our affairs are carried on, and with it a general wish for some sort of reformation. That desire for reformation operates every where except where it ought to operate most strongly—in this house. The proposition which has been lately made by a truly noble duke, and those propositions which are this very day making in the other house, by a noble lord of great talents, industry, and eloquence, are, in my opinion, a reproach to us. To us, who claim the exclusive management of the public purse, all interference of the lords in our peculiar province is a reproach.

“This is the second year in which France is waging upon us the most dreadful of wars, a war of economy. M. Neckar has opened his second budget. In the edict of November last the king of France declares, in the preamble, that he has brought his fixed and certain expences to an equilibrium with his receipt. In those fixed expenses he reckons an annual sinking of debt. For the additional services of the war he borrows only two millions. He borrows not for per-

petuity, but for lives ; and not a single tax is levied on the subject to fund this loan. The whole is founded on economy, and on improvement of the public revenue. This fair appearance, I allow, may have something at bottom which is to be detracted from it ; a large unfunded debt is probably left. Be it so ; but what is our condition in respect of debts both funded and unfunded ? What millions shall we not, must we not, borrow this year ? What taxes are we to lay for funding these millions ? which of our taxes already granted for these three years are not deficient ? not one, in my opinion. We must tax for what is to come ; we must tax for what is past, or we shall be at a dead stand in all the operations of the war. Are we to conceal from ourselves, that the omnipotence of economy alone has, from the rubbish and wrecks, and fragments of the late war, already created a marine for France ? Are we not informed that, in the disposition and array of the resources of that country, there is a reserve not yet brought forward, very little short of an annual two millions and a half, in the war taxes ? Against this masked battery, whenever it shall be opened in the conflict of finance between the two nations, we have not a single work thrown up to cover us. We have nothing at all of the kind to oppose to it. The keeping this supply in reserve by France is the work of economy, of economy in a court formerly the most prodigal, and in an

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administration of finance the most disorderly and corrupt. Absolute monarchies have been usually the seats of dissipation and profusion ; republics of order and good management. France appears to be improved. On our part, indeed, we are not ; we are not, indeed, what we have been ; and, in our present state, if we will not submit to be taught by an enemy we must submit to be ruined by him. On this subject of economy, on the other side of the house they have not so much as dropped a single expression ; they have not even thrown an oblique hint which glances that way. What the ministers, whose duty it is, and whose place furnishes them with the best means of doing that duty, refuse to do, let us attempt to do for them. Let us supply our defects of power by our fidelity and our diligence. It is true that we shall labour under great difficulties from the weight of office ; and it is a weight that we must absolutely sink under if we are not supported by the people at large. This house has so much sympathy with the feelings of its constituents, that any endeavour after reformation, which tends to weaken the influence of the court will be coldly received here, if it be not very generally and very warmly called for out of doors. But to offer is all that those out of power can do. If the people are not true to themselves, I am very sure that it is not in us to save them. I cannot help observing that the whole of our grievances are owing to

the fatal and overgrown influence of the crown; and that influence itself to enormous prodigality. They move in a circle, they become reciprocally cause and effect; and the aggregate product of both is swelled to such a degree that, not only our power as a state, but every vital energy, every active principle of our liberty, will be overlaid by it. To this cause I attribute that nearly general indifference to all public interests which, for some years, has astonished every man of thought and reflection. Formerly the operation of the influence of the crown only touched the higher orders of the state; it has now insinuated itself into every creek and cranny in the kingdom; there is scarce a family so hidden and lost in the obscurest recesses of the community which does not feel that it has something to keep or to get, to hope or to fear from the favour or displeasure of the crown."

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The people were not unmindful of the call which Burke thus made upon them. Yorkshire and Middlesex, counties which may be said to represent the landed and monied property of the kingdom, took the lead. The Yorkshire petition was comprehensive in its object, and explicit in its avowals; it was strong though temperate in language, constitutional in principles, exact and circumstantial in details. It set forth that the nation had, for several years, been engaged in an expensive and unfor-

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fortunate war. Valuable colonies had declared themselves independent, and formed a confederacy with foreign enemies. A large addition to the national debt, a heavy accumulation of taxes, a rapid decline of the trade, manufactories, and land rents of the kingdom, were among the consequences of the war. Alarmed at the diminished resources, and growing burdens of the country, the petitioners were convinced that rigid frugality was now necessary for the salvation of the state. They observed, they said, with grief, that many individuals enjoyed sinecure places with exorbitant emoluments, and pensions unmerited by public service. The true end of every legitimate government was then declared to be the welfare of the community. The British constitution, seeking the public good, had entrusted the national purse to

* A motion was brought forward by the Earl of Shelburne, that same day, in the lords, against the practice of incurring, under the name of extraordinaries, debts which had not been authorized by parliament. The motion was lost by a majority of 81 to 41. Fox, who was present during the debate, went down to the commons house, and said, "I am just come from another place, where the first men in the kingdom, the first in abilities, the first in estimation,

are now libelling this house. Every instance they give, and they give many, and strong instances of uncorrected abuse, with regard to public money, is a libel on this house. Every argument they use for the reduction of prodigal expense, and their arguments, are various, and unanswerable, is a libel on this house. Every thing they state on the luxuriant growth of corrupt influence (and it never was half so flourishing), is a libel on this house."

the house of commons. To that house, therefore, they appealed, and they represented that until effectual measures were taken to redress these grievances by suppressing all useless donatives, and preventing unnecessary and extravagant largesses, the grant of any additional sum of money beyond the produce of the present taxes, would be injurious to the rights and property of the people, and derogatory from the honour and dignity of parliament.

This petition was signed by upwards of eight thousand freeholders; it was adopted at a meeting of six hundred gentlemen, possessing in the aggregate, more property than the whole of the members of the house of commons;* and a committee of opulent and influential men was appointed to advocate its prayer. Other counties had followed the example, and so general was the feeling of the nation, that a recapitulation of the names of the petitioning counties, would be a repetition of nearly all the counties of the kingdom. Meetings were held, speeches equally reprobating the conduct of the ministers, and that of the majority of both houses were delivered, and committees were appointed in each county to correspond with each other, and organize the agitation.† In the debate upon the petition, the venerable Whig,

* Sir George Saville's speech upon presenting the petition.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xx., col. 1378.

† Annual Register for 1780.

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Sir George Saville, appeared to advocate the cause of his constituents. Fox proposed the question as a test to determine of which party, corruption was the child. The Whigs were willing, were desirous that it should be sacrificed: the Tories had made similar professions. The time was come, he said, to prove the sincerity of both. "Let us see which will now acknowledge this dear but denied child corruption." Mr. Turner came forward with a petition from nearly all the burgesses of York, and Burke produced one from Bristol, declaring that these petitions were not to be forsaken like an ostrich's egg, to be fostered by the accidental rays of the sun in barren sands, but to be followed up with care and perseverance, nor to be abandoned until they had produced their offspring.

On the 11th of February, 1780, Mr. Burke brought forward his plan for the better security of the independence of parliament and the economical reformation of the civil and other establishments. The whole scheme was contained in five bills. By the first, all crown lands, except those especially excepted by the bill, were directed to be sold, and the proceeds applied to the public service. The second, which applied to Wales and Chester, was for more perfectly uniting the principality and county palatine to the crown, abolishing useless offices, selling the crown lands, and applying the produce to the public service.

The third and fourth carried the same reform into the duchy and county palatine of Lancaster, and the duchy of Cornwall.

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The fifth was the celebrated Establishment bill, which proposed to abolish the office of third secretary of state, a great variety of offices of the household, the boards of trade, green cloth, and of works. The offices of keeper of the king's hounds, many of the civil branches of the ordnance, the whole establishment of the mint, the patent offices of the exchequer, many offices connected with the payment of the army and navy, together with numerous other public establishments, were all proscribed by this sweeping reformation. Moreover a new arrangement of the civil list was proposed, by which the debts which were so constantly accruing upon it would be prevented for the future, and priority of payment was ensured to the least powerful claimants, the first lord of the treasury being the last on the list.

The arrangement of the details of such a measure was a herculean task, and many of his contemporaries thought that the genius of Burke was of too elevated a nature to allow him to garner the minute information necessary to its accomplishment. They were ignorant of the character of Burke's mind. The same indomitable industry and facility of analysis which enabled him to resolve into its first principles the subject of a speculative inquiry, attended him in this

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more practical investigation. Great as was the idea entertained of his talents, expectation was infinitely surpassed by the introduction of the plan itself. In the hands of most men the description of such a scheme would have been a dry and tiresome enumeration of details which could have interested none but those whose existence it threatened. Burke, however, rendered his subject no less attractive than it was important. "His bill," says Mr. Gibbon, "was framed with skill, introduced with eloquence, and supported by numbers. Never can I forget the delight with which that diffusive and ingenious orator was heard by all sides of the house, and even by those whose existence he proscribed." Gibbon, a member of the board of trade, was one of these.

The demands of the people had been so distinctly made known, that the Tories did not venture to offer a formal and general opposition to the Whig scheme. It was read a second time without opposition,* and

* I have said without opposition, although the house divided upon the committal. That mischievous maniac, Lord George Gordon, now appears in parliament, distracting the proceedings with his disorderly speeches, and insisting upon divisions in which he had either the house or the lobby to himself. Upon this occasion, the division

was attended by a singular circumstance. As there was not room enough in the lobby to contain those who intended to go forth there were 90 who were obliged to remain within, and being numbered with his lordship, made up 91 against committing the bill.

the care of the ministerial party was confined to destroying it in committee. The divisions in committee were exceedingly close, and strongly prove the necessity of an opposition applying itself to some question which the people can understand to be directly beneficial to themselves. Upon the clause abolishing the office of third secretary of state, the Tories succeeded only by a majority of seven.* A few days after, the Whigs succeeded upon the clause for abolishing the board of trade, by a majority of eight. On the third day, however, the Tories recovered their courage, and when the clause which carried reform a step nearer the throne was proposed, it was rejected by 211 against 158. Burke now declared his bill was gone, and professed to take no further interest in its progress, but Fox roused him to his wonted attention, by declaring that the least advantage was worthy of the struggle, that they would together renew the bill from session to session, and if they only succeeded in destroying the seven lords of trade this session, they would have seven of the enemies less to fight against in the next.†

This manifestation of an intention to destroy the bill, which had now become the object of all popular favour, produced an excitement without doors, which reanimated the Whigs. On the 6th of April, Mr.

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* Parl. Hist., vol. xxi., col. 340.

† Ibid., 374.

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Dunning made that celebrated motion which gave the first check to the supremacy of the Tories. After passing many high encomiums upon Mr. Burke's bill, and contrasting the favour with which it had at first been received by the house with the hostility by which it had been more recently met, he intimated that he was firmly persuaded the latter temper and disposition which had appeared against the bill originated with the sovereign. That bill, he argued, had been introduced to diminish the improper influence of the crown ; Colonel Barrè, with the same object, had introduced a plan for the institution of a committee of accounts ; Sir J. P. Clerke had offered a bill to exclude persons holding contracts privately made from the house of commons. All these attempts to further the prayer of the petitions upon the table had been met with an appearance of candour and afterwards decently destroyed. Every plan of retrenchment had been rendered unavailing, "And now," said the speaker, "ministers stand forward and tell you that it is not competent for this house to inquire into the expenditure of the civil list."*

That the influence of the crown was increased and ought to be diminished, was, he argued, a matter of notoriety to be decided by the consciences of those who, as a jury, were called upon to determine what

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxi., col. 403.

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was and was not within their own knowledge. “I can affirm,” he said, “upon my own knowledge, and pledge my honour to the truth of the assertion, that I know upwards of fifty members of this house who always vote in the train of the noble lord in the blue ribbon (Lord North), yet who confess out of the house, that the influence of the crown is increased, and dangerously increased.” To these men, and to the whole house, he now proposed a test, the decision would declare whether the petitions of the nation were to be really attended to or finally and totally rejected. He then moved, that it was necessary to declare that the influence of the crown has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished. Appending to this bold declaration, an assertion of the right of the house of commons to examine into the expenditure of the civil list revenue, as well as every other branch of the public revenue.

A debate ensued, of which we have, probably, but a very imperfect report, since the acknowledged leader of the opposition is not named as a speaker, and Fox is only mentioned as making an incidental observation. We can, however, sufficiently discern that it was stormy and acrimonious; that Lord North was subjected to the most vehement abuse, goaded out of his usual refuge of wit and good-humour, and provoked to turn angrily upon his assailants.* An

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxi., col. 414.

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abusive is generally a falling minister. At twelve o'clock, the commons divided, and declared by a majority of 18, that the influence of the crown had increased, was increasing, and ought to be diminished. The effect was electrical. The minister, wont to be so haughty, frequently vouchsafing no other answer than a division to the arguments of the Whigs, was suddenly and unexpectedly prostrate, imploring the committee to adjourn, and ineffectually protesting against its proceeding, as violent and arbitrary. The Whigs were suddenly raised from despondency to triumph, and Burke afforded them an opportunity for giving vent to their hilarity by a witty speech which he made in answer to the lamentations of Mr. Rigby, the Tory paymaster of the forces.*

At the next meeting of the house the Whigs carried a resolution for securing the independence of parliament by a majority of two ;* but still Lord North held on, confiding in the interest of the court and the disunion or imprudence of the Whigs. His courage appears to have reanimated those of his old adherents who had wavered. In resisting a bill introduced by the Whigs, to prevent revenue officers from voting at elections, he found himself once more in a majority ; the numbers were 224 to 195.* The next day the lords threw out the Contractors' bill,* and the mo-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxi.

mentary struggle was over; the Tories had regained their majority and kept it through the session. This recovery from defeat, a recovery which can be so seldom effected by a minister who is chiefly supported by a large body of pensioned adherents, is highly creditable to Lord North as a clever party tactician. After declaring that the influence of the crown had dangerously increased, a few county members were, or affected to be, alarmed, and absented themselves upon the second division, in which the Whig majority was reduced to two. A sudden illness of the speaker then caused a recess of a few days, and in the interim the point was gained. Lord North brought over persons of a doubtful description so successfully that, by the time the house met again, the new converts were made, the majority secured. All the toil and labour of the Whigs had been at once demolished by the magic touch of the minister, with great ease to himself and doubtless with infinite satisfaction to the persons thus miraculously converted. Such was the account afterwards given of this affair by Mr. Sawbridge in the house of commons; and he challenged the minister, if he denied the charge, to move to have his words taken down, when he would bring forward proofs of tampering, which, although probably not legally sufficient to convict the minister, would be sufficient to justify his accuser. Lord North al-

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ternately denied and ridiculed the charge, but he did not accept the challenge.*

This session Mr. Sawbridge changed his annual motion, in favour of annual parliaments, into a proposition for the repeal of the Septennial act; and his motion, which had hitherto been yearly negatived without debate, assumed a different character. Fox, Byng, and even Barrè, declared themselves converts to the principle, while the more cautious and more strictly aristocratic members of the same party joined the Tories. Thomas Pitt spoke against the motion, but refused to vote. Lord John Cavendish would, in deference to the popular wish, allow the bill to be introduced; but he would not pass it. Burke opposed it altogether, and delivered, upon this occasion, that glittering piece of oratory which has come down to us among his works. Earl Nugent, Lord North, and Mr. Rigby, who were now the most usual Tory speakers, united with these; but Mr. Sawbridge succeeded in getting 90 members to vote for his motion—the majority was 182.

Among the speakers upon this question I have mentioned George Byng, a name not so frequently seen among the leading speakers in a debate as many others, but one which is never absent from those lists

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxi., col. 616. † Ibid., 615.

of divisions which have been preserved, and which usually appears as that of one of the tellers upon the Whig side. George Byng was not particularly distinguished for eloquence or influence; and, had he died young, his name would probably have been unremembered. A long life of constant and energetic labour for the principles of Whiggism, a career unstained by a suspicion of interest, or even of ambition; a rare and unsullied consistency of act and principle—these are the sterling qualities which challenge the attention and the respect of the historian; and which will compel him to assign to so solid and so valuable a character a high place among the public men of this age, many of whom were more brilliant but none so spotless.

Byng's first speech in parliament was upon the Boston Port bill. "I rise, sir," he said, "to speak my mind upon this bill. Whatever principles I have hitherto adopted, be they right or be they wrong, I have always adhered to; and as I live with such opinions I hope I shall die in them. Men's characters are known after their death; and to have steadily adopted one uniform set of principles from which I have not deviated, I hope, will not be deemed factious."* These were his first words in the house of commons, and they contained a pledge which was

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvii., col. 1175.

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honourably redeemed. In popularity and through odium he still retained his consistency ; and so well has he impressed upon his son the character he himself bore, that, in reading the parliamentary debates, we must have recourse to extraneous sources of information to discover where the father's course ended and where the son's began.

On the 1st of September, having sat but six sessions, this parliament was unexpectedly dissolved. In reviewing its proceedings, we find Toryism in all things predominant, but it was not that reckless Toryism which distinguished the early days of its predecessor. Continual discussion, the power and popularity of the Whig orators, and the necessity of recurring to first principles, both for attack and defence of the great questions which were then agitated, had produced some slight toleration of inquiry, some little relaxation of the usual habit of dogmatizing, and upon questions to which they were not already pledged, the Tories of this parliament did not refuse to listen to liberal sentiments, and sometimes to agree to a liberal measure.

In 1778, Sir George Saville and Mr. Dunning had introduced a bill for repealing that sanguinary act which denounced the penalties of high treason against any Roman Catholic priest who should solemnize the mass in England, and which rendered persons of that religion incapable of acquiring landed

property. The Tories, in a very honourable manner, accepted the measure, although it came from Whigs, and was not even recommended by popularity. The iniquitous bill, the shameful result of a party stratagem, was repealed. This cautious relaxation of the thongs of bigotry was received with a yell of execration by the ferocious religionists of Scotland; and although the repeal did not extend to that country, the presbyterians of Glasgow and Edinburgh thought fit to show how they estimated those principles of toleration, under which they themselves reposed, by a general conflagration of popish mass-houses and popish dwellings. The flame spread to England. Lord George Gordon, whose wild debaucheries were innocent in comparison with his religious frenzies, headed an association of persons, contemptible alike from ignorance and station, but detestable for their ferocity and power of mischief. The acts of these worthies are well remembered; the mobs which attempted to overawe the parliament, the drunken champions of Protestantism, who proceeded from the burning of mass houses to the plunder of distilleries, and shouted "No Popery!" while they let loose the malefactors from their gaols—these, and their exploits, belong to the general historian. They were abetted by neither of the political parties; Whigs and Tories were alike objects of hostility to the myrmidons of this Pro-

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testant Association ; the house of Sir John Fielding, and the treasures of Lord Mansfield were ignited by the same hands and perished in the same cause.

The proclamation for dissolving the last parliament was, to the Whigs, sudden and unexpected. They were again taken by surprise, and appear to have remained astonished and inactive, while their opponents were prepared and vigorous. The poverty of the times operating with a general hopelessness that any opposition in parliament would be capable of producing a change of parties, had together so powerful an effect, that candidates were not to be found who would expend the immense sums then necessary to a county contest. Some Whig members had grown tired of their useless attendance, and were careless of their election : others were disgusted by the venality of their constituents, and finding that whenever the touchstone was applied, this alone appeared to be their motive, withdrew in indignation. Such were the reasons assigned by the Whigs for the general success of the Tories in this general election. Of the one hundred and thirteen new members who were now elected, the great majority were Tories. But the feeling, whether of cupidity or loyalty, which had elected them, did not extend to the most popular constituencies. Middlesex returned John Wilkes and George Byng. Westminster, which since the

memorable struggle which had released it from the trammels of the treasury, had always been staunch in the cause of Whiggism, was the scene of an obstinate contest between Charles Fox and the Earl of Lincoln. The Tory was, of course, supported by the whole weight and power of the court, but the Whig was returned by a triumphant majority. The personal influence of the king sufficed to deprive Admiral Keppel of his old seat for Windsor, but the electors of Surrey recompensed him for the loss, and chose him, notwithstanding the great local influence and connexions of his Tory opponent. Upon the whole, the new parliament was highly favourable to the existing ministry; they had a certain majority in both houses, and if a creation of six new peers was now gazetted, the measure testified the gratitude, not the weakness of the party.*

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At the meeting of parliament, the anticipations of the Tories were verified: they carried their address by a majority of 82; and although the personal consideration in which Sir Fletcher Norton was held, left them in a minority when they attempted to refuse him a vote of thanks,† and their majority

* Annual Register.

† A majority of 40 returned the late speaker thanks. Sir Fletcher Morton had sustained a personal altercation with Lord North in

the last session, and had rendered himself obnoxious to the king by the boldness of his language upon the presentation of a money bill. —*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxi., col. 878.

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The next session was one of more decisive result. We may pass over the numerous contests in the houses, which occurred previous to February, 1782. Contests highly interesting to the student of history who peruses them at length, and enjoys the eloquence of the combatants, but dry and unenterprising in a summary. Upon the 27th of this month General Conway repeated the motion which had been so often unsuccessfully made against the further prosecution of offensive war with America. The subject had been regularly debated for so many years, that we cannot hope to find among the speeches any thing worthy of repetition, but, upon the division, Mr. Byng, who had been so constantly the teller of minorities, must have been astonished to find himself in a majority of 234 to 215.

Such was the issue of the American contest in the house of commons. As success grew more hopeless,

* This house, by large, comparative, majorities, met all the ordinary Whig motions for dis-franchising revenue officers, for inquiring into expènditure, increasing the strength of the navy, &c.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxii.

and disasters accumulated, disapprobation of the war had increased in the nation, and the majority had diminished in the commons. As Burgoyne and Cornwallis successively surrendered, as France, Spain, and Holland, successively declared themselves our enemies, conversions to the Whig side of the question went on. The scales were for a short time nearly balanced; several times they vibrated, now the fall was decisive, and Toryism kicked the beam.

Lord North had often declared that he would hold his places no longer than a parliamentary majority should sanction his measures; it was, therefore, expected by the Whigs that he would now immediately resign. They were disappointed. The Tories said "it did not appear by any vote that parliament had withdrawn its confidence from them," and until such a vote was passed, they were resolved to retain their situations. The challenge was accepted; and confiding in their increasing strength, the Whigs resolved to bring this question to immediate issue. Lord John Cavendish, a few days after, proposed a series of resolutions of censure. These stated that, from the year 1775, the nation had expended upwards of one hundred millions, had lost thirteen colonies, and many West India and other islands, was now engaged in an expensive war with America, France, Spain, and Holland, without a single ally;

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 of the administration.

In the debate upon these resolutions, the mover, Lord John Cavendish, Mr. Powys, Townshend, Burke, Sir Horace Mann, Viscount Maitland, Charles James Fox, Thomas Pitt, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, William Pitt, and Lord Howe, were the speakers among the Whigs. For the Tories appeared Jenkinson, now secretary at war, Mr. Secretary Ellis, Earl Nugent, Mr. Rawlinson, Mr. Adam, the lord advocate, and Lord North; several country-gentlemen, who were usually silent, also rose to express their high opinion of the ministers.*

The Whigs generally contended that a uniform series of calamity and disgrace was a sufficient proof of misconduct; weakness or folly, they said, marked each separate measure of every minister, and collectively pervaded the whole system of administration. Lord North's speech is badly reported; but he succeeded on the division by a majority of 10.

On the 15th of March, the motion, varied only so as to evade the rules of the house, was renewed. The Whigs were beaten by a majority of 9. Rather animated than depressed, they returned to the charge.

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxii.

On the 20th a greater number of members appeared in the house than had been before seen during that session. The galleries also were crowded, and all things seemed prepared for a decisive struggle. Earl Surrey rose to bring forward his motion, but Lord North contested the attention of the house ; and, amid the tumult and cries of “order” which ensued, declared there was no administration.

The victory was won ; the Whigs reluctantly withdrew their motion, and the house adjourned.

Such was the catastrophe of the North administration ; a government which, although professing as their creed the strong tenets of Toryism, were as weak and vacillating in their execution as they were severe in their resolves. North and his compeers had formed no design against the liberties of their country ; they had not even the ability and decision to work out with ordinary success the policy of their party. They were not men who, like the Cabal, would have sold their country to France ; nor did they wish to set up the bayonet as the instrument of government in England. Yet, with probably the most honest intentions, they had certainly reduced their country to the lowest condition of distress and helplessness. Whether this result is to be attributed to their acting upon Tory principles, or to their not pursuing their principles with sufficient energy, every reader will

CHAP. X.
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CHAPTER XI.

Formation of the second Rockingham administration—Biographical anecdotes of Richard Brinsley Sheridan—Of Lloyd Kenyon—Policy of the Rockingham administration—Pacification of Ireland—Economic reform—Expunction of the votes upon the Middlesex election—Parliamentary reform—Opinions of the Whig leaders upon this subject—Contractors' bill—Revenue officers' Disfranchisement bill.

THE Whigs re-entered the cabinet under the leadership of the Marquis of Rockingham, who returned to the post he had before held, and presided at the division of the spoil. This division strongly exemplifies the narrow, exclusive, and aristocratic spirit which was so long the bane of the Whig party. The Whigs would espouse the cause of the people, but the conduct of the contest must be left wholly to them ; they alone must be the leaders, their followers

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were never to aspire beyond the ranks. The Tories would oppress the people, but they were generally too weak to be exclusive; and they were always ready to share their tyranny with any who could aid them in their design. Hence the reason why the latter faction has so often recruited its wasted talent from the middle classes; why so many brilliant men, who made their first campaign with the Whigs, spent their life with the Tories. Disgusted at finding, among a popular party, a barrier of aristocracy which they could not pass, they confounded the party with their principles, and discarded both.

Under the new arrangement, Edmund Burke, who had borne all the labour of the long contest, who had for some time, alone, sustained it, who had been for many sessions the acknowledged leader of the opposition, and who, although now joined by a colleague of equal power, could plead that he had supported the cause even against him who now championed it—Edmund Burke was excluded from the cabinet, receiving only the post of paymaster of the forces. Those who were considered sufficiently worthy to be admitted into the cabinet were the premier, the Earl of Shelburne and Fox, secretaries of state, the third secretaryship was abolished; Lord John Cavendish, chancellor of the Exchequer; Admiral Keppel, created a viscount, first lord of the admiralty; Duke of Grafton, lord privy seal; Lord Camden, president of

the Council; Duke of Richmond, master-general of the ordnance; Lord Thurlow to continue chancellor; General Conway, commander-in-chief of the forces; and John Dunning, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster, now created Baron Ashburton. From this list, the reader will notice the absence of names far more conspicuous in the contest than many of those who obtained the prizes, but those efficient servants of the party who were not qualified by connexions with the great Whig families to a seat in the cabinet were compensated with offices which were, perhaps, equally lucrative, although less honourable.* Among

* The inferior appointments were thus distributed :

Duke of Manchester, lord chamberlain ;

Viscount Chewton, vice chamberlain ;

Viscount Weymouth, groom of the stole ;

Earl of Jersey, master of the buckhounds ;

Earl of Carlisle, lord steward of the household ;

Lord Rivers, lord of the bed-chamber ;

Earl of Effingham, treasurer of the household ;

Earl of Ludlow, comptroller ;

Lord de Farrars, captain of the band of gentlemen pensioners ;

Viscount Althorpe, James Grenville, and Frederick Montagu, lords of the treasury ;

Sir Robert Harland, Bart., Hugh Pigot, Lord Duncannon, Hon. John Townshend, O. Brett, R. Hopkins, lords commissioners of the admiralty ;

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Thomas Orde, under-secretaries of state ;

Lloyd Kenyon, attorney-general ;

John Lee, solicitor-general ;

Hon. Thomas Townshend, secretary-at-war ;

Right Hon. Isaac Barre, treasurer of the navy ;

Edmund Burke, paymaster-general of the forces ;

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these appointments, we remark names which show that the most brilliant era which has ever distinguished the British house of commons was arrived; that Burke and Fox were no longer to remain without rivals, but must share their laurels with competitors who now stood forward to claim for our assembly perfection in every style of eloquence, and to render the time in which they flourished the Augustan age of English oratory. Richard Brinsley Sheridan had recently entered the political scene, and now shared the triumph of his party.

The friendship and correspondence of Dr. Sheridan and Dean Swift, and the competition, and even rivalry, which Thomas Sheridan so long maintained with Garrick, the former the grandfather, the latter the father of Richard, are the first remembered intimations of that versatile and hereditary talent which has, for several generations, distinguished this family.

Earl of Tankerville, Right Hon.

H. F. Carteret, joint postmaster-general ;

Lord William Gordon, vice-admiral of Scotland ;

Sir William Howe, lieutenant-general of the ordnance ;

Hon. Thomas Pelham, surveyor-general ;

Lord Howe, created viscount, to command the grand fleet ;

Sir Fletcher Norton was created Lord Grantley ;

The Duke of Portland, lord lieutenant of Ireland ;

Earl of Scarborough, Sir George Yonge, Bart., joint vice-treasurers of Ireland ;

Colonel Fitzpatrick, secretary to the lord lieutenant ;

Lieut.-general Burgoyne, commander-in-chief of the forces in Ireland.

Richard was born in Dublin in the year 1751, and having undergone the discipline of a preparatory school was, when twelve years old, sent to Harrow. Here, after some time, he fell under the ferrule of Dr. Parr, who could discover in him neither industry nor emulation, but found him slovenly in his construing and defective in his Greek grammar. Nor would so unpromising a pupil have probably excited the doctor's special notice, had he not remarked in him, when speaking upon subjects foreign to the business of the school, the vestiges of a superior intellect. Even the particular attention, the probing and teasing of Dr. Parr, did not succeed in making Sheridan a scholar. He was at home in Virgil and in Horace; he could talk copiously of Cicero; he had read the four orations of Demosthenes as they are taught in our public schools, and, perhaps, he occasionally looked into the Iliad. Such was the full extent of his classical reading when he left Harrow, and it does not appear to have been afterwards extended, except we call his partnership translation of Aristænetus an extension of his acquaintance with the *classics*.

At Harrow, Sheridan contracted a friendship with one of his schoolfellows named Halhed, and when these two friends left the school, they continued their intercourse. Feeling an equal desire of literary distinction, they set out together, and embarked their first venture in the same bottom. In the let-

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ters written at this time by Halhed to Sheridan, it is said by a very competent judge,* that there is a youthfulness of style, and an unaffected vivacity of thought, which could scarcely have been surpassed by his witty correspondent. The superiority of either of these adventurers who set out thus amicably together in search of fame, could scarcely have been then determined. How different have been their fates. One has fully reached the goal of immortality for which he started; the other is lost among the crowd of adventurers who left their homes to push their fortunes in India. Halhed's name would never be adverted to but as that of the friend of Sheridan.

At an early age Sheridan turned his attention to politics; there have been found, among his papers, many drafts of letters prepared for the public newspapers. Some of those were written during the Grafton administration, and those which are not avowed and infelicitous imitations of Junius, discover a clearness of thought and style very remarkable in so young a writer.

The pecuniary resources of Sheridan were very limited; his father now settled in Bath, had nothing beside the pension of 200*l.* a year conferred upon him for his literary merits, and the little profits he derived from his lectures. From him, therefore,

* Mr. Thomas Moore's Life of Sheridan.

Sheridan could expect no material assistance, and other resources he had none. At his father's house, Sheridan encountered Miss Linley; a young lady who, by her talents and beauty, had attracted universal admiration, and who had extended her conquests over half the beaux of Bath. Sheridan had no sooner seen her than he worshipped among the rest. With that peculiar faculty of making himself beloved which distinguished him through life, and often formed his only stay amid a thousand difficulties, he now pressed his suit. It was not an easy adventure. A girl who was beautiful, yet not mercenary, living in an atmosphere of applause, yet gentle and unpretending; an actress, yet without a film upon her fame, was not destitute of pretenders to her love: her personal charms, the exquisiteness of her musical talents, and the full light of publicity which her profession threw upon both, had extended her fame, until the Maid of Bath, as she was then called, was on all sides besieged with suitors. Sheridan could scarcely look around him without discovering a rival. His friend Halhed, and even his brother Charles, had felt her influence, and not suspecting that Richard also was a suitor, overwhelmed him by their confidence. The power, however, of a superior mind is, where the object is capable of appreciating its superiority, as great in rivalries of love as in struggles for power; it was not long before the heart

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of the young siren was all his own. But Sheridan was a jealous lover. It is said, that he has ridiculed his own morbid sensibility at this period, in his character of Falkland, in "The Rivals." The general admiration to which his mistress was subjected, the ambitious views of her father, the honourable pretensions of a wealthy old gentleman, named Long, and the less legitimate persecution of a married man, named Matthews, combined to keep alive his jealousy and perpetuate his misery. At length he persuaded his romantic songstress to elope with him from the scene of all her triumphs, and to fly to France, where he would place her in a convent. Sheridan was at this time little more than twenty, Miss Linley was just entering her eighteenth year. The young people, accompanied by an old woman, as a preventative against scandal, made good their escape to London; and, when arrived there, having probably but slender funds at his disposal, Sheridan, with equal boldness and dexterity, introduced his companion to a merchant, an old friend of the family, as a rich heiress who had consented to elope with him to the continent. The prudent old gentleman warmly commended his wisdom in having abandoned all pursuit of the portionless Miss Linley, and so highly approved of his present project, that he accommodated the fugitives with a passage in one of his own ships then about to sail to Dieppe, and gave them letters

to his correspondents at that place, who, with the same zeal and despatch, facilitated their journey to Lisle.

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When they were safe from immediate pursuit, Sheridan found no great difficulty in convincing his charge, that it was as essential to her fame as to his happiness that a marriage should precede her entry into a convent. The ceremony took place, and Sheridan returned to England, leaving his young wife in a convent, at Lisle, until he could strike out some expedient for obtaining an income which might enable him to claim and support her. Upon his return, Sheridan found Miss Linley's persecutor, Matthews, furious with rage, and threatening death to the stripling who had dared to step between him and his prey. Sheridan was not long in offering him the revenge he sought, but the courage of this "Nimrod to all female fame," as Sheridan had before called him, was not equal to his gallantry. In the duel he disgraced himself—a disgrace which was hardly effaced by another meeting which desperation made him demand, and an unwise generosity influenced his adversary to grant. In this second encounter Sheridan was dangerously wounded.

Miss Linley had been brought back by her father, and as her marriage was known only to herself and her husband, she continued in the exercise of her profession. Sheridan, forbidden her society by her

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father, was reduced to the necessity of beholding his wife from among the audience of the theatre, or of snatching a few words with her in the disguise of a hackney-coachman, as he drove her home after the performance. Linley, however became, at length, convinced that it was impossible to keep the young couple any longer separate. Accident had drawn from his daughter a sudden intimation of her marriage, and, at length, the marriage of Sheridan, now a member of the Middle Temple, and the celebrated Miss Linley of Bath, was formally announced.

The necessity of acquiring some more immediate source of income than could be hoped for from his profession, produced from the happy husband the completion of a comedy from the numberless fragments of dramatic inventions which had been accumulated since his childhood, among his papers. In January, 1775, "The Rivals" appeared, and Sheridan's fame was at once established as a dramatic writer.

It is not our province to pursue Sheridan's career in this character; his first effort gave him all the dramatic fame he coveted, and a few years satiated him with his successes. As a successful author he had obtained access to Devonshire House, whither centred all that was noble, brilliant, or powerful, of the Whig faction. There he saw Burke, the friend and equal of those with whom he

lived; his nobility of intellect received as an equivalent for nobility of birth, and his obscure origin forgotten in the contemplation of his political power. Sheridan was still the son of an actor, and he saw that nothing but a successful career in politics could efface this mark of inferiority from the minds of his associates. Thenceforward politics became his business. He began to discipline the enthusiasm which had long ago borne him into party controversy, to lay up stores of the necessary knowledge, to bend his mind to the task, and to concentrate its powers.

His first effort, in conjunction with the party with which he had now connected himself, was the establishment of the "Englishman," a paper started by the Whigs, in 1779. Sheridan, Townshend, Grenville, and Fox, the conductors of this periodical, were none of them distinguished for punctuality. The Englishman was very capricious in its appearance; and, after many apologies for omitted numbers, the paper at length ceased altogether.

Sheridan now attached himself in an especial manner to Fox, and his first appearance in public was under that party-chief's auspices, in the year 1780. Then, when Fox, as chairman of the Westminster committee, signed the resolutions in favour of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, Sheridan signed a report on the same subject from the sub-committee, which was also laid before the public.

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On the dissolution of 1780 Sheridan was returned for Stafford, forming a rare instance of one of the great men of this period who did not first enter the house of commons as the representative of a close borough.*

Sheridan's first essay in parliament was made in defence of his own seat. The author of "The Rivals" was listened to with great attention and curiosity; but, apparently, with equal disappointment. Rigby, a veteran debater, turned all his virtuous indignation at the charges brought against him into ridicule; and Sheridan stood fully in need of the extended aid of Fox, who, in turn, demolished the raillery of his opponent by a torrent of vehement crimination. Having made his essay, Sheridan hastened to the gallery, where Woodfall, in whose judgment and experience the wits of that day had great confidence, was sitting, and asked him, with much anxiety, what he thought of his first attempt. Woodfall's reply must have been almost destructive to so ardent an aspirant. "I am afraid this is not your line," he said, "you had better have stuck to the stage." Sheridan rested his head

* This is no recommendation of the close borough system. Men of genius found the service of a party less arduous than that of the people, and the reward more sure. A close borough was the bounty-

money by which such recruits were commonly enlisted. It was generally felt through life as a fetter which chafed and confused the most manly intellect.

upon his hand, and remained silent a few minutes, then suddenly exclaimed with vehemence, "It is in me, however, and, by God, it shall come out." His confidence was well justified by the event; but it does not appear that his reputation as a speaker was by any means so suddenly attained as his fame as a dramatist. Throughout the great contests which intervened between his return to parliament and the resignation of Lord North, Sheridan is not found occupying any distinguished station. A review of the occasions upon which he spoke would rather suggest the opinion that he felt himself unequal to mingle in the conflict beside Fox and Burke, and was contented to try his unpractised pinion in a minor flight. Even these attempts were prefaced by preparation and close study. He wrote out his early speeches before he delivered them, as carefully as he sketched the outlines of his plays. He was contented to make his way gradually, but surely; to avoid shocking the prejudices of those, who would hardly endure that the son of a player, and the owner of a playhouse, should seize at once a chieftainship in a political party; or of those, perhaps equally numerous, who deem a man wedded to the profession in which he has excelled, and an intruder and an empiric if he ventures to forsake it for another.

At his outset, Sheridan does not appear to have discovered that rich vein of wit which afterwards ren-

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dered him the favourite of the house of commons ; and securing for him a willing audience, when Fox failed to arouse, and Burke was heard with listlessness. His first efforts in oratory were in a grave and florid style, and we are amused to find him seriously rebuking Rigby and Courtenay for treating a subject before the house with levity and raillery. He had, however, sufficiently distinguished himself to make him considered an important ally by his party, a fact proved by his appointment to an under-secretaryship by this Rockingham administration.*

Lloyd Kenyon also was introduced to public life by his appointment as attorney-general to this ministry. There is nothing in Kenyon's career to distinguish it from that of other successful lawyers. He first devoted himself to a branch of the law which requires patient and unwearied attention rather than brilliancy and eloquence ; he gradually acquired a reputation as a sound lawyer, and the practice which followed this reputation enabled him to amass a fortune. Thus he was toiling on, little known beyond his profession,† when a Whig minister

* This sketch of Sheridan's early life is derived entirely from Mr. Moore's Life of Sheridan.

occasion, he was eclipsed by his junior, who was no other than Erskine. There is a memoir of

† He had been, indeed, employed in the defence of Lord George Gordon, but upon this

Lord Kenyon in the Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxii.

created him at once, without the usual preparation of the solicitor-generalship, attorney-general. Whether Kenyon obtained this appointment by ardent professions of Whiggism, or whether, as is perhaps more probable, he owed it to the friendship of Lord Thurlow, it is difficult to decide. The continuance of Thurlow in the chancellorship was a concession to the private wishes of the king, a concession which was neither prudent or patriotic; but since it had been made, Lord Rockingham probably thought it better to extend his conciliatory policy, and to deliver up Westminster Hall altogether to the Tories.

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This appointment was another instance of that weakness of purpose which has operated to make the bar a stronghold of Toryism. Ambitious men thought that while obedience was the only passport to Tory favour, opposition was their best recommendation to a conciliating Whig government. Had Dunning and Glynn been Tories, they had obtained the highest honours of their profession, they certainly would not have been left, the one altogether neglected, and the other withdrawn from his profession, to behold a political opponent enjoying the rewards they had earned, and sitting as lord chancellor in a cabinet of their friends.

It now remained to be proved whether the Whigs who had so loudly advocated beneficial reforms when the Tories were in power, would remain consistent,

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when consistency must bring them into collision with the court. An advocacy of principles when in opposition, which they would not put in practice when in power, has always been the ready accusation of their opponents ; an accusation, however, which is not, to any great extent, borne out by the history of the party. The American war was certainly the grand topic of party contest throughout the North administration ; but there were other ancillary questions involved in the same general principles upon which the two parties were equally at issue. The chief of these were, the government of Ireland, Mr. Burke's economical reform, the decision of the house of commons in the case of the Middlesex election, and the great rising question of parliamentary reform.

The first of these was a dispute precisely similar to that which had produced the American war. Ireland, not yet united to Great Britain, legislated by a separate parliament, and taxed by a separate house of commons insisted upon her right to a perfect, legislative, and judicial independence. The patriot party in her house of commons, led by Grattan, Flood, Burgh, and Yelverton, and abetted by Lord Charlemont and his party in the house of lords, demanded that the powers possessed by the privy council of sending down money bills, and suppressing, or altering others that had passed, should be abolished ; that the English house of peers which

had recently usurped the appellate jurisdiction of the peers of Ireland should restore it, that the Mutiny bill should be, as in England, an annual measure, and that the act of 6 George I., which asserted a legislative power in England over Ireland should be repealed. The refusal of Lord North to listen to their complaints had produced in this neighbouring island, results, too similar to those that had preceded the rebellion in America to be viewed with indifference. Associations for non-importation and non-consumption of British manufactures arose, and a threat of invasion from France afforded excuse for the enrolment of volunteer companies and military societies. This latter project was no sooner conceived than it was executed. Suddenly, and as if by preconcerted signal, arose vast bodies of citizens, training themselves to arms, choosing their own officers, serving at their own charges, and increasing in numbers until they could overawe the regular forces drained off as these had been by the American war, and, until in the pride of their strength, they pointed to America as their example, and to their arms as their protection. Lord North, alarmed at their power, made some concessions which allayed their immediate violence but did not satisfy their demands ; but no sooner had that ministry resigned than Mr. Eden, the Tory secretary, came over to

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England, and insisted upon the necessity of the immediate recognition of all their claims. This factious attempt failed, the Irish still preferred the party which had always been their friend, to that which was only become generous when it had no longer the power to give; they received the Duke of Portland, the Whig lord-lieutenant, with every manifestation of confidence and esteem: a repeal of the declaratory act passed the British parliament, the large power of the executive in Ireland was exerted in a liberal spirit, and Lord Shelburne declared in the house of lords, the principle of Whig policy towards Ireland—"that it was just that there should be no distinction between that country and Great Britain."* The Irish, as grateful for kindness, as impatient under insult, received the new measures with loud demonstrations of joy and satisfaction; an address was carried through both houses, with scarcely a dissentient voice, declaring that no constitutional question between the two countries would any longer exist; and liberal supplies were voted for the general defence. Thus was the armed population of Ireland converted by the Whigs from watchful enemies to devoted allies.

The next topic of the Whigs in opposition was

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii., col. 37.

that of economical reform ; it was also one of the first measures of the Whigs in government. A message from the throne recommended it to the parliament, and Burke revived his bills. His plan enabled his majesty to pay off the debt upon his civil list, but provided against the recurrence of such exorbitant encumbrances for the future. The reforms in the household effected an annual saving of 73,000*l*. The next quarter in which he applied the pruning knife, was in that of his own office, which had hitherto been enormously lucrative, from the custom of allowing immense sums of public money to remain in the paymaster's hands. This source of wealth to himself Burke abolished.

Wilkes, who annually moved the expunction of the votes of the house upon the Middlesex election, was now successful. Fox, who had been as violent for his expulsion as any Tory of the house, had not now the firmness to own his error : he voted and spoke against his colleagues, but was left in a minority of 47 to 115. Thus suddenly had the house of commons changed their opinions with the change of ministers.

Reform in parliament was the last and mightiest of all these questions. When the generation which witnessed the existence of nomination boroughs shall have passed away, the next will probably smile at the contest which their fathers

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thought so severe. It will be scarcely believed that the principles of representation could stand in need of advocacy ; still less will it be deemed credible that those who were its advocates were derided as visionaries and mad enthusiasts ; that even the Whigs looked upon it as pregnant with ruin ; or that their leaders, finding it necessary to echo the popular cry, took refuge in extremes, and provided against the success of their proposals by dashing them with absurdity. Yet such was the policy of Fox and Sheridan. Annual parliaments and universal suffrage, the wildest instrument of anarchy that could be devised for a civilized country, formed the repulsive body in which they incased the principle of parliamentary reform. Fox thus succeeded in making it terrible to every moderate person, while Sheridan was equally successful in making it ridiculous. "He," he said, "was an 'oftener if need be,' " adverting to a joke of Burke, who, when the advocates of annual parliaments argued from the ancient act, which provided that parliaments should be holden at least once a year and "oftener if need be," covered the reasoners with ridicule by inflicting upon them this name.* We may trace the smile of irony even in the most eloquent of the numerous speeches in which Fox and Sheridan pretended to enforce a parliamentary reform. Whenever the

* Moore's Life of Sheridan.

remedy proposed was gentle in its nature and gradual in its operation, they were in earnest ; when it included an organic change they but bandied it in sport. As a moderate party holding the balance between the two extreme factions of Toryism and democracy, the Whigs would not sanction a violent reverting even to the ancient constitution, while it appeared possible to avoid the revolution. In this they were more timorous as statesmen than prudent as party-men. The old Whig constitution would still have kept the Whig party in power : it was the treasury boroughs which excluded them. Had they been bold enough at this time to join the democrats in a body, and to force from the Tories a large measure of parliamentary reform, the long reign of Toryism would not have succeeded, the crusades in favour of despotism would not have taken place.*

* Since the rise of the democratic faction, the Whigs have owed all their reverses, as a party, to their timidity of the people. Mankind, when not interested in the result, love bold and extreme measures. Interest alone procures admiration for prudence. The majority of the people, knowing they possessed no voice in the elections, thought they had no interest in the constitution under

which they were made, and shouted for the candidates most likely to destroy it. But the possession of power, generally, not universally, tends to fit a man for its exercise. The mind assumes a dignity from the occasion, and reasons before it decides. The schoolboy monitor of a class is more restrained by his sense of dignity than he will be a year later, as an undergraduate at a university ; the master of arts

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But the Whigs, although they trembled to attack the stronghold of corruption, were very ready to demolish its outworks. They passed through the commons the bill for excluding contractors, which they had introduced when in opposition : and when, after much fighting in the lords, the bill came back to them mutilated, they refused to adopt it, and at last prevailed upon the peers to pass it in its original form. This was no inconsiderable blow to ministerial corruption : it was accompanied by another which deprived revenue officers of their votes at elections. Mr. Onslow, Lord Nugent, Sir F. Basset, and some others of the determined Tories opposed it in the

there is more careful of his deportment than he is when he arrives in London, a junior student of one of the Inns of Court ; the sense of dignity is throughout attendant upon the possession of authority. Even age imposes gravity only because it confers authority. The analogy, I think, holds good in political discussions ; even the concession of household suffrage and the ballot would operate much more to strengthen the hands of the Whigs than to increase the influence of that small knot of politicians who, classing themselves improperly among Radical reformers, propose no limit to their organic

changes short of absolute democracy. Nearly all disfranchised democrats would become enfranchised Whigs. The experience we have had of household constituencies shows that, although they have often returned violent men to resist violent enemies, they have shown no disrespect to the claims of property, or even of rank. An assembly thus returned would certainly tolerate no abuse, they would pass the thumb-nail over the statue of the constitution, but they would religiously defend it from destruction. But I am stating an opinion, not advocating an experiment.

commons, but their minority never exceeded 14.* In the lords the Earl of Mansfield, whom the death of Lord Chatham had left without a superior, delivered a long oration against the bill, arguing that the influence of the crown was by no means too great, and exhorting his peers not to be hurried away by the rage for reformation that prevailed. Lord Rockingham's answer was highly interesting, as exhibiting a picture of the magnitude of the evil now redressed. He stated that there were no less than seventy boroughs where the election depended chiefly on the votes of revenue officers; and that the custom-house and excise could alone command 11,500 votes. He put it to the house whether it would not be a great cruelty to oblige these 11,500 persons to vote against the persons who had given them their places; yet, if such means were persisted in by one party, no other party could exist without following their example.† This hint to the Tories that they were preparing a proscription against their friends had the desired effect—the bill passed. A bill which released seventy boroughs from the thraldom of the minister, was, in itself, no inconsiderable parliamentary reform.

An example, also, was exhibited to electors by the disfranchisement of the borough of Crichdale, which had long been an open market for votes—not that it

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxii., col. 1338. † Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii., col. 101.

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could be more corrupt than many of its neighbours, but, because it was more indecent and unblushing in its corruption : the Tories fought for it with a confidence worthy of their clients, and Lord Mansfield, and his legal friends in the lords, sustained the contest with considerable pertinacity. But they were worsted upon division, and the bill passed.

CHAPTER XII.

Pitt's motion in favour of a parliamentary reform — Biographical Anecdotes of William Pitt—Debate upon his motion—Death of the Marquis of Rockingham—The Shelburne administration.

THUS far the Whigs advanced in concert to the very confines of organic change. Burke, Townshend, and others of the party, would go no further. Among the men who were prepared to overstep this limit, existed the differences of opinion which must always obtain in a body associated for action. Sawbridge, and a few others in the house of commons, were earnest in their pursuit of universal suffrage. Wilkes made the same cry an instrument of pecuniary gain, and laughed at it in private. Fox and Sheridan practised a similar duplicity for a party purpose. But among the Rockingham party, opposed in heart as this body was to pernicious extremes, there existed a strong feeling in favour of a moderate parliamentary reform. *The interest of the Whig*

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party absolutely demanded such a reform. The vast number of Treasury boroughs placed the decision as to which party should govern, in the hands of the king, and although the odium arising from a long series of disasters would sometimes give to the popular voice a power superior to that of corruption, yet such events must be rare and transient: the hurricane of national indignation might, indeed, for an instant, appear to have mingled the elements, and destroyed those laws of order which its violence suspended; but the next moment it was passed away, and the trade wind of Toryism blew steady and continuing as before. So long as seventy seats in the house of commons were at the private disposal of the king, so long the Whigs could only hope to possess the government during fitful moments of high popular excitement.

George III. was the first monarch of the House of Hanover who felt himself secure upon the British throne, or could venture to cancel the debt of gratitude his family owed the Whigs. The use he had made of his opportunity must have convinced the Whigs that the favour of the monarch, though highly to be valued when fairly obtained, was not their natural support. Patriotism in kings, like virtue in individuals, is doubtless their true interest; yet how few of those who repeat this truth are strong-minded enough rigidly to adhere to it. A monarch, of an

enlarged and philosophic mind, would probably prefer the principles of the Whigs as conducive alike to his safety and his glory, but a weak or narrow minded king would infallibly cleave to the practice of the Tories, and the Whigs would be driven from the helm, precisely at the moment when their vigilance would be most required.

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Henceforward, therefore, the great question to be decided between the factions, was whether the king or the nation were to judge upon what principles the government should be conducted.

Chatham appears to have foreseen that this would be the ultimate question ; and to have foretold its decision, when, speaking of the nomination boroughs, he said, " This is what is called the rotten part of the constitution ; it cannot continue the century, if it does not drop off it must be amputated."* Parliamentary reform was now become so evidently necessary as a party measure, that we must consider any Whig who is found opposing a rational and well-digested measure of that nature, to have been either of very limited comprehension, or very feeble party principle.

The question was pressed upon the notice of the Rockingham administration by William Pitt, son of its great originator, the Earl of Chatham.

* Parl. Hist., vol. xvi., col. 100.

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In producing William Pitt in the position which his father would have held, few words of preface will suffice. His origin is made illustrious by his father's deeds. The traveller, who meets with the infant Rhone tumbling with headlong violence amid the precipices of Switzerland, prefers to trace it up to its native glacier before he follows its course towards the lake in which it terminates ; but he, who meets with that other Rhone, careering among the fields of France, remembers that it rushes from the lake fed by the waters of its mountain sire, and does not wonder that it is so beautiful. The impetuous career of the Earl of Chatham will interest every reader, in tracing the scattered records of his obscure youth. In the youth of his son there is nothing of obscurity and little of interest. The second son of the Earl of Chatham was designed for the bar and the senate. He received the rudiments of education from his father, whose frequent intervals of confinement left him leisure for instruction ; and so well did he profit by the lessons of his illustrious preceptor, that, at the age of fourteen he was found qualified for the university. He was probably more indebted to the instruction he received at the bedside of his father than to his tuition at Cambridge, or his experience upon the continent, when, in 1780, he was called to the bar. He went the western circuit once, and appeared, in a few cases, as junior counsel. The duties of a junior

counsel in a circuit cause are too few and trivial to offer any opportunity for distinction ; and Pitt's forensic talents may be said to have been untried in 1781, when, after an unsuccessful canvass of Cambridge, he was brought in by Sir James Lowther, now in opposition, for the borough of Appleby. Pitt, so far as the different character of their minds would admit, had imbibed the political principles of his father ; and he made his first speech, in the house of commons, in support of Burke's bill of economical reform. As the son of the Earl of Chatham, he, of course, fixed the attention of the house ; nor had his auditors listened to him long before they confessed that he would be able to step forth from the halo of his father's name, and work out for himself a title to eminence. Throughout that and the ensuing session he took part in all the efforts made to unseat Lord North, voting and speaking upon every occasion with the most decided portion of the Whig party, even to supporting Mr. Sawbridge's motion for triennial parliaments. When the triumph was achieved, and the minister fell, Pitt was among those who exulted over his defeat : but the veteran parliamentary debaters around him must have smiled when they heard a young man of two-and-twenty say, that he himself could not expect to take any share in a new administration ; but were his doing so more within his reach, he never would

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accept of a subordinate situation.* In compliance with this confident resolve, he refused a seat at the treasury board, under the new ministry.

William Pitt now brought forward the question of parliamentary reform. "The moment was come," he said, "when it was necessary that there should be a calm revision of the principles of the constitution, and a moderate reform of such defects as had imperceptibly and gradually stolen in to deface, and which threatened at last totally to destroy, the most beautiful fabric of government in the world. The country was now blessed with a ministry whose wishes went along with those of the people, the people were unanimous throughout the kingdom, and their representatives were nearly unanimous in that house. All men had confidence in the declarations of those who had so invariably proved themselves the friends of freedom. All things pointed out this as the auspicious moment of reformation. The frame of the constitution had," he said, "in modern times, undergone material alterations, which had given a dangerous bias to the commons house of parliament, a bias which had become so powerful that the representatives had ceased in a great degree to be connected with the people. The representation had been designed to be equal, easy, practicable, and com-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxii., col. 1149.

plete. When it ceased to be so; when the representative ceased to have connexion with the constituent, and was either dependent upon the crown or the aristocracy, there was a defect in the frame of representation, and it was not innovation; but recovery of the constitution to repair it.

“ The instances of boroughs either absolutely governed, or totally possessed by the treasury, were too numerous and notorious to require enumeration, and where this influence was opposed, it was usually not by the people or for the people, but by an aristocrat for aristocratic purposes. There were other boroughs which had no existence in property, in population, or in trade, which had no other inhabitants but the servants of the person who owned the borough, and himself made the return of its members. Others there were which possessed no other property than the votes of their electors, and belonged more to the nabob of Arcot than to the people of Great Britain—were more within the jurisdiction of the Carnatic than the limits of the empire of Great Britain. In none of these boroughs did real representations exist.”

Having stated the extent of the evil and put several cases of extreme ruin which might readily accrue from such a cause, he spoke of the remedy. Declaring his reverence for the constitution, and his respect even for its vestiges, he was nevertheless fortified in

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his opinion of the necessity of reform by the assistance of abler and greater men than himself, particularly of one now no more, of whom every member of that house could speak with greater freedom than him. That person was not apt to indulge vague and chimerical speculations inconsistent with practice and expediency : yet he personally knew that it was the opinion of the late Lord Chatham, that without recurring to first principles in this respect, and establishing a more solid and equal representation of the people, by which the proper constitutional connexion should be revived, this nation, with the best capacities for grandeur and happiness of any on the face of the earth, must be confounded with the mass of those whose liberties were lost in the corruption of the people. The means of accomplishing the end he would not pretend to dictate, and to obviate all disunion of sentiment among those who were equally anxious with himself to secure the object, he moved only for a committee in which the question might be discussed, and a remedy meeting the approbation of all might be devised."

William Pitt upon this day occupied a glorious position. Exulting in youth and eloquence, his mind stored with the overflowings of the perennial fountain of his father's wisdom, the repository of the private thoughts of the revered statesman whom England had not yet ceased to mourn, he stood forward bear-

ing his father's mantle, pursuing the path which he knew he would have delighted to have trod, and dispensing to his countrymen those oracles of wisdom which had been confided to him for his country's good. He was supported by those who had known and honoured his father; Sir George Saville, one of the few who had acted with the first William Pitt in his days of power and glory, welcomed the promise of another Chatham; Sawbridge and Byng were not absent from the debate; Alderman Townshend still advocated the principles of his youth: while, on behalf of the Whig party, Fox and Sheridan paid their tribute of encomium to the young orator, and exerted all their eloquence in favour of his cause. On the other side, Mr. Thomas Pitt, the head of the family, and the proprietor of Old Sarum, defended the system which gave him a seat in the house. He objected that every innovation is an experiment, and all reformation to be effectual must be gradual; that ancient and valuable rights should not be lightly violated upon the fanciful grounds of theory and speculation; that the purpose of a parliament was to be a balance to the crown, and the aristocratical weight of property in the commons had alone enabled it to effect that purpose; and that the principle of representation inevitably led to universal suffrage, and must be either carried through to that point, or abandoned. Defects he admitted to exist; if

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specific remedies were proposed for specific defects, he would seriously consider them ; but so general, so undefined a measure would be an act of madness and infatuation tending only to tumult and disorder.

Such were the arguments of an honourable man, who had no wish hostile to the object in view, but whose immediate interest unconsciously biassed his judgment as to the means. Such also was Sir Horace Mann, who opposed the motion as ill-timed. Men who had not themselves misused their borough interest for selfish purposes could not discover that it was dangerous, or that their country should call upon them to resign a power that had never been detrimental to her interests. Many other Whigs, unaccustomed to take any enlarged view of party questions, and still more who preferred their private interest to their party principles, defended their boroughs. The Tories opposed the motion with consistency, using the same arguments, but with a different object, and fighting not only for their borough property, but for their party power. Mr. Dundas, the lord advocate of Scotland, and Mr. Rigby, were, however, the only eminent speakers of that party who appeared in the debate. Upon the division the motion was negatived by 161 to 141.*

* This debate is reported in xxii., pp. 1418 to the end of the the Parliamentary History, vol. volume.

Complaints were rife that this defeat was accomplished by the insidious hostility of ministers who had privately opposed a measure they had openly supported. But this accusation was unjust. Fox and his friends were earnest in support of the motion, and even prevailed upon Burke and the anti-reforming members of the Whig party to absent themselves from the debate. This is tested by the closeness of the division, where the majority was so small, that it offered, if the Whigs remained in office, a sure and speedy prospect of triumph to the minority.

Such were the events of four months of Whig government. While parliament was still sitting, and several of the government measures still in progress, the existence of the ministry was untimely terminated by the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, who died on the first of July, having sustained during a life spent in his country's service, the reputation of an honourable, consistent, and moderate statesman.

The Whig party were still divided upon the subject of America. Lord Shelburne and his friends retaining the opinion they had held with Lord Chatham, were extremely unwilling to acknowledge her independence, and the king saw in their reluctance a hope that he should not be compelled to abandon the war. Lord Shelburne, therefore, was immediately appointed successor to the marquis, upon the condition that some hold upon America

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should be retained.* Fox and his friends, who saw no hope of peace while such a condition was imposed, and no hope for the country while the war continued, resigned.

The Shelburne government was now formed, consisting of the Earl of Shelburne, first lord of the treasury; Hon. William Pitt, chancellor of the exchequer; Lord Grantham and Thomas Townshend, secretaries of state; Lord Thurlow, lord chancellor; Lord Keppel, first lord of the admiralty; Lord Camden, president of the council; Duke of Grafton, lord privy seal; Duke of Richmond, master-general of the ordnance; Lord Ashburton, chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster; Sir George Yonge, secretary at war; Henry Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville), treasurer of the navy; Colonel Barrè, paymaster of the forces; Lloyd Kenyon, attorney-general; Richard Pepper Arden, solicitor-general; Earl Temple, lord lieutenant of Ireland; Hon. William Wyndham Grenville (afterwards Lord Grenville), secretary.

The party must be strong indeed in talent, which could afford to exclude such men as Fox, Burke, and Sheridan, and yet hope to carry on the government. The division was the more singular since both the remaining and the seceding parties differed more

* Dr. Franklin.

among themselves than they did from the friends from whom they separated. Thus Fox and Burke had now very few opinions in common, while Fox agreed with Pitt, Sir George Yonge, Lord Ashburton, and many other members of the Shelburne government, upon the great question of parliamentary reform, and upon every other question except that upon which they divided. With all our admiration of the character of Fox, it is difficult to pronounce that some personal jealousy, of which he was probably even himself unconscious, did not influence his judgment and prompt his resignation.

The prorogation of parliament prevented any display of the strength or weakness of the new ministry. During the recess, it is said, that Lord Shelburne made overtures to Lord North* without success, and set on foot negotiations for a general peace.

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* Annual Register. But it is their own coalition. Burke still not impossible that this rumour held some influence over the Annual Register. was invented by Burke or his friends to cover the disgrace of

CHAPTER XIII.

State of parties in the commons—Debate on the preliminaries of peace—Coalition of Lord North and Mr. Fox—Fox's defence of his conduct—Defeat of the minister—Premiership offered to William Pitt—He declines—Formation of the coalition cabinet—Relative strength of Whigs and Tories—Mr. Fox's India bill, nature and policy of this scheme—opposed by Pitt—Passes the commons—Is rejected by the lords—Dissolution of the coalition ministry.

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UPON the meeting of parliament in December, 1782, it was discovered that the question which had formed the ostensible cause of the schism in the Rockingham cabinet had been abandoned, and that the minister had at length resolved to concede the absolute independence of America. That Fox should feel injured by the manner in which he had been thus turned out of office, upon a point which his opponents themselves abandoned as soon as it was gained, was but natural; a dignified resentment and a distant

deportment towards those by whom he had been supplanted, were called for by the occasion and had been worthy of his character. Such appeared for a short time to be his policy. According to the computation of a person likely to be correct, Fox numbered about 90 followers, Lord North 120, and the minister 140, the rest being unattached. But Fox found that his followers were not so devoted as he supposed; in a division which he ventured upon his own strength he found himself supported only by 46 votes against 219.

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The nation confused by the distracted state of parties awaited the issue with some curiosity, not unmingled with fear lest the dissensions of the Whigs should again let in the Tories. On the 17th of February, the house of commons assembled to take into consideration the preliminaries of peace that had been now signed, and curiosity was at once changed into astonishment. Charles Fox and Lord North sat upon the same bench, their followers intermingled around them, they proposed the same amendment, adopted the same arguments, spoke, voted, acted in all things as one united party. They succeeded, the amendments were carried by a majority of 16, the numbers being 224 to 208.*

The debate was well contested. When the members

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii., col. 436.

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of the new opposition attacked the ministers on account of a peace which was certainly as disadvantageous as even the disastrous nature of the contest could have promised, they were answered by bitter sarcasms against the unnatural coalition from which those attacks proceeded, and by repetitions of the violent expressions of hatred or contempt with which the new allies had been accustomed to assail each other. A few days later, the coalition brought forward resolutions of censure upon the preliminaries, and after a debate of great power and interest carried them by a majority of 17. The Earl of Shelburne, upon this defeat, immediately quitted his office, and Pitt announced that he only held his place as chancellor of the exchequer until a successor should be appointed.

The occurrence of this coalition is greatly to be deplored, as an example to men, who, without any of the power, may nevertheless feel inclined to imitate the errors of Fox. It is to be deplored as a blot upon the character of a great man; as a precedent which strikes at the foundation of political morality; and as a weapon in the hand of those who would destroy all confidence in the honesty of public men.

It would, however, be unfair to refuse insertion to the defence which Fox made for this alliance in the house of commons. "I am accused," he said, "of having formed a junction with a noble person

whose principles I have been in the habit of opposing for the last seven years of my life.) I do not think it at all incumbent upon me to make any answer to this charge: first, because I do not think that the persons who have asked the question have any right to make the inquiry; and, secondly, because if any such junction was formed, I see no ground for arraignment in the matter. [That any such alliance has taken place I can by no means aver.] That I shall have the honour of concurring with the noble lord in the blue ribbon on the present question is very certain; and if men of honour can meet on points of general national concern, I see no reason for calling such a meeting an unnatural junction. [It is neither wise nor noble to keep up animosities for ever.] It is neither just nor candid to keep up animosity when the cause of it is no more. It is not my nature to bear malice or to live in ill will. [My friendships are perpetual, my enmities are not so.] *Amicitiae sempiternae inimicitiae placabiles.* I disdain to keep alive in my bosom the enmities which I bear to men, when the cause of those enmities is no more. [When a man ceases to be what he was, when the opinions which made him obnoxious are changed, he then is no more my enemy but my friend. The American war was the cause of the enmity between the noble lord and myself. The American war and the American question is at an

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end. The noble lord has profited from fatal experience.] While that system was maintained, nothing could be more asunder than the noble lord and myself. But it is now no more, and it is therefore wise and candid to put an end also to the ill will, the animosity, the rancour, the feuds which it occasioned. I am free to acknowledge that when I was the friend of the noble lord in the blue ribbon, I found him open and sincere; when the enemy, honourable and manly. I never had reason to say of the noble lord in the blue ribbon that he practised any of those little subterfuges, tricks, and stratagems, which I found in others, and of those behindhand and paltry manœuvres which destroy confidence between human beings, and which degrade the character of the statesman and the man.”*

The last sentence of this defence is a confession of guilt, intimating too plainly that it was personal disgust, which more powerfully than patriotism impelled Fox towards Lord North.

The coalition had so completely mingled the two parties, had so shaken together the vinegar and oil, that it will be some time before they can be separated, or can assume their relative positions.

The king's strongest antipathy was to Fox, his next was to his party. Among the latter, however,

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii., col. 487.

he thought he had discovered a man who might be converted to his service, and whose acquisition would be worth any pains he could bestow. George II. had been advised to trust the first William Pitt, and he would find him tractable. George III. might have received from Dundas the same advice with respect to the second. When Shelburne was proved unable to maintain his ground, Pitt was called into the royal closet and offered the premiership. To a young man of four-and-twenty, of brilliant talent and high aspirations, the offer must have been almost irresistible; but the very fact of such a proposal being made to one without age, experience, influence, or followers, argues either the ignorance or the arrogance of him who made it;—ignorance, if he saw not in the then state of parties the difficulties of such an undertaking; arrogance, if he expected that these difficulties should succumb at once to the royal will. Pitt must have reluctantly admitted to himself that, at this juncture, he could not stand a day. He declined the dangerous honour. Lord North was then applied to, but he refused to treat alone; and after other attempts to induce Pitt to assume the reins, the king was at last compelled to admit Fox into the negotiation.

Many difficulties and delays, however, occurred before the arrangements could be completed; and

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the country remained for six weeks without a ministry: Those who were not in the secrets of the parties, could not comprehend the delay, and distrusted the intentions of the king. It was not until the house of commons became impatient, and notices were given of motions to address the crown for an administration entitled to the confidence of the people, that there appeared any immediate intention of filling up the vacancies; nor was it until the motion was carried, and a strong resolution upon the subject had been discussed, that the new ministry was settled.

On the 2d of April, the appointments were announced. The Duke of Portland was, by general consent of the coalesced parties, constituted first lord of the treasury; North and Fox were secretaries of state; Lord John Cavendish, chancellor of the exchequer; Viscount Keppel, first lord of the admiralty; Viscount Stormont, president of the council; the Earl of Carlisle, privy seal. These seven formed the cabinet, in which it will be seen that the Whigs had the majority.*

* The inferior appointments were :

Lord Loughborough, Sir William Henry Ashurst, and Sir Beaumont Hotham, lords commis-

sioners for the custody of the great seal.

The Earl of Surrey, Frederick Montagu, and Sir George Cooper, lords of the treasury ;

In a ministry thus composed, it is evident that the great party disputes must either be suffered to lie dormant, or be discussed as open questions. Such was the case with that of parliamentary reform. When Mr. Pitt brought forward his annual motion upon

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Hugh Pigot, Esq., Viscount Duncannon, Hon. John Townshend, Sir John Lindsay, William Jolliffe, and Whitshed Keene, lords of the admiralty ;

The Earl of Hertford, lord chamberlain ;

The Earl of Dartmouth, lord steward of the household ;

Right Hon. Charles Greville, treasurer of the household ;

Viscount Townshend, master-general of the ordnance ;

John Courtenay, surveyor-general of the ordnance ;

Henry Strachey, storekeeper of the ordnance ;

William Adam, treasurer of the ordnance ;

Hon. Richard Fitzpatrick, secretary-at-war ;

Edmund Burke, paymaster of the forces ;

Charles Townshend, treasurer of the navy ;

The Earl of Cholmondeley, captain of the yeomen of the guards ;

James Wallace, attorney-general ;

John Lee, solicitor-general ;

John Foley and Henry Frederick Carteret, joint postmasters-general ;

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Richard Burke, secretaries to the treasury ;

Hon. Mr. St. John and Hon. Colonel North, under-secretaries of state ;

The Earl of Sandwich, ranger and keeper of St. James's-park and Hyde-park ;

The Earl of Jersey, captain of the band of pensioners ;

Lord Hinchinbrooke, master of the buck-hounds ;

The Earl of Mansfield, speaker of the house of lords ;

The Earl of Northington, lord lieutenant of Ireland ;

William Windham, secretary to the lord lieutenant.

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this subject he had Fox and his party speaking and voting with him, North and his followers against him. The resolutions moved this year were of a very moderate character; their objects were to diminish the expense of elections, to disfranchise such boroughs as should be proved notoriously corrupt, and to make an addition to the representation of knights of the shire and burgesses for the metropolis. But they were negatived by a majority of 144,* very nearly two to one; a division, which contrasted with that which took place under the Rockingham administration, sufficiently proves that the Whigs of that cabinet were sincere. The great superiority of the anti-reformers upon this occasion seems to intimate that the question having been made an open question, Burke, and his party of anti-reforming Whigs, considered themselves at liberty to vote against their friends and colleagues.

The great undertaking of this coalition government was the India bill, which monopolized its energies, and at length became its destruction. The affairs of the East-India Company had, for some time, employed the attention of the house of commons. Two committees had been diligently investigating the state of the country that had been intrusted to the company's governance, and had

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii., col. 875.

discovered abuses which required the prompt interference of parliament. The policy of Mr. Hastings was declared to be equally tyrannical to the Hindoos, disgraceful to his country, and unprofitable to the company; yet the court of proprietors refused to obey the vote of the house of commons which required his recal. Mr. Dundas was the chief agent in this laborious investigation. In a series of one hundred and eleven resolutions he set forth the abuses of Indian government, provided remedies, and punished the perpetrators of injustice. But the effects of the mal-administration of the company were felt as severely in the city as in the carnatic. All India was united against them, the expenses of war drained their coffers, and embarrassed their accounts. In 1783, their debts were 11,200,000*l*. Their stock 3,200,000*l*.; while two millions' worth of bills were on their way to England, for which the company were unable to provide. The company paid in taxes to the nation an annual thirteen hundred thousand pounds; a consideration which coinciding with the shock that its failure would give to our credit, forbade the government to allow it to proceed to bankruptcy. Some interference, therefore, was absolutely necessary. Fox thought he saw in the conjuncture an opportunity of securing his party against the power of the king, and he seized it with a decision worthy of such a party leader. By the bill which he

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introduced, he relieved the company at the same time from their pecuniary embarrassments and their political duties. He vested the supreme government of India, and the distribution of all the patronage connected with it, in seven commissioners, who, being named by him, were, of course, his political friends, and he placed their tenure of office upon the same footing as that of the judges of England. Other parts of the plan guarded against the injustice of the governors, and provided for the protection of the governed, but the institution of the commission was the chief feature in the bill which demands our notice. It was a master-stroke of policy ; having as its intention to throw the whole patronage of our vast possessions upon the continent of India, for at least one entire generation, into the hands of the Whigs. It was upon this occasion that Pitt, for the first time, stepped forward as the chosen antagonist of Fox. He made use of the weapon which Fox had put into his hands, and declaimed against the iniquity of the coalition ; although he, as well as others of the Shelburne party who harped upon this theme, took too much pains to show the inconsistency of Fox in coalescing with the *man* he had condemned, and too little trouble to point out a single point in which he had abandoned the *principles* he had professed. Pitt attacked the bill upon the ground that it was an entire abridgment of ancient

charters and privileges upon no other excuse than necessity : necessity the plea of every illegal exertion of power or exercise of oppression ; the pretence of every usurpation, the plea for every infringement of human freedom, the argument of tyrants, the creed of slaves. He opposed it also, because it increased the influence of the crown to the destruction of the liberties of Englishmen. That influence, he said, had never, in its zenith, been equal to what it would be, when it should find itself strengthened by the whole patronage of the cast, and in the possession of such an extensive source of influence and corruption. The proposed system was, in his opinion, nothing more than absolute despotism on the one side, and gross corruption on the other—one of the most bold and forward exertions of power that was ever adopted by a minister.*

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These arguments, together with a discussion of arithmetical details, which tended to prove that the affairs of the company were not in so desperate a state as Fox had represented them, formed the topics upon which the opposition descanted during the long and powerful debates which marked the course of this bill. Fox, on the other hand, defended his bill upon the principles of the revolution. It was

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiii., col. 1211.

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by neither side of the house denied that gross abuses existed in the Indian government, and that the most infamous tyranny had marked the policy and practice of the company. No man will tell me, said Fox that a trust to a company of merchants stands upon the solemn and sanctified ground by which a trust is committed to a monarch; yet every syllable urged in behalf of this charter impeaches the establishment by which we sit in this house, in the enjoyment of this freedom, and of every other blessing of our government. Sovereigns are sacred, and reverence is due to every king; yet with all my attachments to the person of a first magistrate, had I lived in the reign of James II., I should most certainly have contributed my efforts, and borne part in those illustrious struggles which vindicated an empire from hereditary servitude, and recorded this valuable doctrine, that ‘trust abused is revocable.’”

Notwithstanding the opposition of Pitt and Dundas, the bill passed triumphantly through the commons, by majorities of more than two to one, and was, on the 9th of December, carried up to the lords by Mr. Fox.

The first debate in the lords showed that the opposition had been successful with the king. Lord Thurlow, who retained the confidence of his master,

although no longer in office, declared against the bill. "I wish," he said, "to see the crown great and respectable; but if the present bill should pass, it will be no longer worthy of a man of honour to wear. The king will, in fact, take the diadem from his own head, and place it on the head of Mr. Fox."* The effect of this manifestation of the royal will was soon apparent. Upon the first division, the ministers were beaten by a majority of eight: and upon the second reading, the bill was rejected by a majority of 19.

The open use which had been made of the king's name† upon this occasion attracted the attention of the commons; and produced a motion for a resolution, declaring it to be a high crime and misdemeanor to report any opinion of his majesty, upon a bill before either house, with a view to influence the votes of the members. This resolution was supported by ministers, and carried by a majority of 153 to 80. It was followed by a resolution deprecating a dissolution of parliament.

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv., col. 125.

† The king commissioned Earl Temple to say, that whoever voted for the India bill, were not only not his friends, but that he should

consider them as his enemies; and if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger or more to the purpose.

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On the 19th of December, the king sent to demand the seals from his secretaries ; declining an interview. Thus ended the short existence of the coalition ministry, which had entered office a few months previously with every prospect of its members holding their places for life. The causes of its fall were the hostility of the king, who having avowedly received them upon compulsion sought the first opportunity to eject them, and their unpopularity with a people who never countenance political tergiversation. Against the sulky antipathy of the king, the favour of the nation and the splendour of his abilities might have maintained Fox as they had maintained the first William Pitt ; but under the odium of the coalition he fell. The great parliamentary strength of the minister, the unequalled blaze of talent by which he was surrounded, serve only to render his fall the more instructive, and to deter any statesman who may have his provocation, or his ambition, from following his example.

Had the India bill proceeded from Fox in the height of his popularity, unstained by any contact with Toryism, it would probably have been a popular measure ; but it came from one who was denounced throughout the kingdom as an apostate, one from whom all those populous constituencies which had formerly idolized him had now withdrawn their con-

fidence, whom London had repudiated, and even Westminster had renounced. All the objectionable points of this bill were now seen through a microscopic medium ; it took its character from its author, and reflecting back the colours it had received, deepened the shades of his unpopularity.

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CHAPTER XIV.

Formation of the Pitt administration—Strength of the opposition—The minister left in a minority—Mediation of the country gentlemen—Unsuccessful—Perseverance of Pitt—Diminution of the opposition majority—Dissolution of parliament—General election—Adverse to the coalition—The Westminster election—Westminster scrutiny—Pitt's motion for parliamentary reform—Debate upon Mr. Beaufoy's motion for the repeal of the Corporation and Test acts—Illness of the king—Contest upon the subject of the regency—Conduct of Thurlow—Recovery of the king.

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Now, when the offer of the premiership was repeated, Pitt no longer refused it. Lord Temple received the seals ; but alarmed by the storm, raised by his imprudent declaration of the will of the king, he resigned them three days after. The new premier was startled by this stumble at the threshold, and, when his own relations forsook him, appeared to doubt the sincerity of others who were so eagerly cheering him on. The night after this resignation was passed in an anxiety which banished sleep ; but the

morning found him resolved to persevere, “though very doubtful of the result.”*

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He proceeded to fill up the offices in the best manner he could; many who wished him success declining to share the hazard of the adventure. Thurlow, the king's friend, of course, returned to his old station as lord chancellor. Lord Gower, afterwards Marquis of Stafford, without any previous acquaintance with Pitt, sent to him to say, that although he had wished to spend the remainder of his days in retirement, yet in the present situation of the king, and distressed state of the country, he would cheerfully take any office in which it might be thought he could be useful. He was made lord president of the council, and his extensive Tory connexions were of no small advantage to the youthful minister. The Duke of Rutland was lord privy seal. Thomas Townshend who, early in this year had been created Lord Sydney, and Lord Carmarthen, were secretaries of state. Lord Howe was first lord of the admiralty.†

* Tomline's Life of Pitt, vol. i., p. 174.

† The chief of those appointments which did not confer a seat in the cabinet, were, the Duke of Richmond, master-general of the ordnance; Kenyon, attorney-general; Arden, solicitor-general; William Wyndham Grenville,

afterwards Lord Grenville, and Lord Mulgrave, joint paymasters of the forces; Dundas, treasurer of the navy; Sir George Yonge, secretary at war; George Rose and Thomas Steele, secretaries of the treasury. The Duke of Rutland was lord lieutenant of Ireland.

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Such was the cabinet at the head of which Pitt undertook to sustain a conflict with a party superior to his own in numbers, and headed by Fox, Burke, Sheridan, and North. Upon scrutinizing this ministry, it will be seen that it was the result of a coalition of parties as open and shameless as that which Pitt professed himself resolved to punish. When Fox and North coalesced, there was a fragment of each party which refused to follow. These, after raising a terrible clamour against the turpitude of their late leaders, finding that they were of little consequence individually, themselves coalesced, and as they continued to sustain the cry against the unnatural coalition between Fox and North, the nation forgot to scrutinize the materials of which this new noisy party was composed. The complaint against Fox was that he had taken to his bosom a man whom he had denounced as the author of the miseries of his country. The charge was just, but not so the accusers. Pitt the parliamentary reformer, the hater of the American war, the violent Whig, as he made the accusation, ranged himself with Lord Gower the coadjutor of the Duke of Grafton, the promoter of the American war, the personal antagonist of the Earl of Chatham,* the violent Tory. Lord Sydney,

* The reader of the parliamentary debates during the American war, will recollect many instances in which the alterca- tions of Chatham and Gower assumed a very personal character.

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who had been accustomed to rank himself among Whigs, sat beside the tory Lord Thurlow. The Duke of Richmond, violent in his Whiggism as he had always been, would readily have found among his colleagues a Tory pair. Dundas, the new treasurer of the navy, whose zeal for the American war had even outstripped that of Lord North,* might have neutralized the Whiggism of the duke. The Marquis of Carmarthen, whose unfrequent efforts at oratory had been hitherto made on the Tory side, was about to receive his Whig equivalent in Lord Camden, who stood at the door of the cabinet, and only awaited a vacancy. The joint paymasters were already well balanced in their party principles. Wyndham Grenville, the able supporter of the Rockingham administration, was prudently paired with that vehement Tory, Lord Mulgrave.† Sir George Yonge, the new secretary at war, the old companion of Fox and Byng, is without a pair. He may be left at leisure to contemplate the chequered character of his companions,

The Pitt ministry, therefore, like that of the Duke of Portland, was the result of a coalition. But there was this difference between them : In the coalition

* See his speech upon Lord North's conciliatory propositions. *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xviii., col. 332. motion for the sentence of the court-martial on Sir Hugh Paliser.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xx., col. 627.

† See his speech on Mr. Fox's

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between Fox and North, Fox and the Whigs had the predominance; the principles of action would have been Whiggish, the sentiments of the chiefs would have descended to the followers, the hostility of the court and the opposition of a strong body of Tories would gradually have effaced all Tory predilections, and the followers of Lord North would have been insensibly draughted into the Whig phalanx.

The coalition of Pitt and Gower, on the contrary, gave the preponderance to the Tories. Weak in parliament, such a party could only rely for support upon a Tory king, and could only retain that support by adopting Tory principles of government. Under such an influence it was to be expected that the colours of Whiggism would speedily fade, and the hue of Toryism become deep and uniform.

Upon the assembling of the house of commons, on the 19th of December, Fox and North, Burke, General Conway, Lord John Cavendish, Sheridan, the late attorney and solicitor generals, Colonel Fitzpatrick, and others of the coalition leaders were seen sitting upon the opposition benches,* and supported by a plentiful attendance of adherents. The treasury benches were nearly empty; the ministers

* Fox, upon entering the house, finding Dundas upon the opposition bench, jocularly took him by the arm, saying, "What business have you on this? Go over to the treasury bench." This raised a laugh, in which the coalition party very heartily joined.

were gone to their re-elections. Among the few subordinates present, all was gloom and distrust. Among the opposition, nothing appeared but gaiety and good humour. Fox's superiority was so evident, that the Pitt party did not attempt a division. The first attempt of the majority was to provide against the possibility of an immediate dissolution of parliament, and, not trusting for this purpose to the efficacy of addresses, they were careful to delay the business of supply.

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On the 12th of January, Pitt re-entered the house, and at once found himself standing at bay against the whole band of opposition. A majority of 39 against him convinced him at once of the temper of the assembly. Fox was still the manager of the house of commons. It was he, at the head of the opposition, who fixed the day upon which the ordinary measures of government should be brought on ; and who postponed, or suffered them to pass as they suited his convenience. The minister could only offer his suggestions upon the subject.* Resolutions were passed, declaring a necessity for an administration having the confidence of that house, and the majority against the minister was now increased to 54.

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The opposition appear to have been in perfect

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv., col. 603.

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good-humour ; satisfied with their strength, and rather amused by the embarrassment of the minister than enraged at their own dismissal. Their return to office was considered as certain, and there were few persons who did not think with Fox, that the usurpation of Pitt was a political absurdity totally unparalleled in the annals of immature ambition.

An ordinary minister, beaten in one night, by two such majorities, upon questions aimed against the existence of his government, would either have resigned or dissolved the parliament. But Pitt was not in an ordinary position. George III. looked upon the contest as one in which he himself was one of the principals and his minister but a second. Every defeat in the commons brought a more decided assurance of support from the king. He declared himself ready to stake his crown and his life upon the issue, and Pitt knew that treachery to his servants was not in the character of his master.* He neither resigned his office, nor dissolved the parliament. The sense of the nation was not yet sufficiently in his favour for the latter expedient ; the former, his ambition, his confidence in his own powers, and gratitude to the master who had exalted him above his fellows, alike forbade. In the course of a triumphant opposition,

* See this correspondence between Pitt and the king, in Tomline's Life of Pitt.

there must occur some errors—these might be exposed with success ; the violence put upon the will of the king would become daily more plain—his powerless state would have a powerful effect upon the minds of a loyal people. If Pitt fought the battle well, the spectacle of a young and able leader, singly holding out against such odds, would arouse the generous feelings of the nation in behalf of the weaker party, and draw the nation to his side.

These considerations influenced him to persevere. He now introduced his India bill, which, in addition to the other points of difference from that of Fox, had this marked characteristic, that it left the patronage in the hands of the company. On the second reading, this measure was vehemently attacked by the opposition, as a temporizing temporary measure possessed of neither vigour or permanency ; and, on the motion for its committal, it was thrown out by a majority of 222 to 214.

Still, through all his defeats, the minister held on. The country gentlemen, as those members who hold themselves disengaged from either party are usually designated, now undertook to interfere. A meeting of about 70 of these took place at the St. Alban's Tavern, and an address signed by 53 commoners was presented to the Duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt, urging a liberal and unreserved intercourse between these two statesmen, as a preli-

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minary to the formation of a ministry which should include all those great and respectable characters who were entitled to the support of independent and disinterested men.

Both parties professed themselves anxious to show deference to so respectable a meeting. The Duke of Portland, however, added, that the chief difficulty which he saw, and the greatest which he thought must be experienced by Mr. Pitt was, Mr. Pitt continuing to hold office.* Mr. Grosvenor, in the house of commons, moved a resolution in accordance with the address of the St. Alban's Tavern, and it was carried unanimously.† The king now reluctantly consented to allow Pitt to treat with the Duke of Portland for the purpose of forming an administration upon a wide basis and on fair and equal terms. The duke, before he would meet Mr. Pitt, required an explanation of the sense in which the term equal was used. Pitt refused any preliminary explanation, and the treaty was at an end. Each party threw the odium of the failure upon their opponents; but, from the terms of the letter in which the king conveyed his permission to treat, it is plain that no equality could have existed.‡ His hatred of the

* Annual Register. Tomline's Life of Pitt.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv., col. 472.

‡ In this letter he says, "Mr. Pitt is well apprized of the mortifi-

cation I feel at any possibility of our again seeing the heads of opposition in public employments, and more particularly Mr. Fox * * * * I confess I have not seen the

Whig leaders was so great, that it could not be restrained—it appears in every act.

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Meanwhile the coalition proceeded with their attacks. They carried a resolution that the continuance of the present ministry in office was the obstacle to the formation of such an administration as might enjoy the confidence of the commons; and they sent those members of the house who were also members of the privy council, to lay their resolution before the king. The king returned no answer to this communication, and the house postponed the supplies. This last expedient is a very dangerous attempt in this commercial country; and, unless the people are at the moment very highly excited against the minister, must infallibly prove the ruin of the opposition which proposes it. Fox, with all his boldness and decision of character, felt this, and carefully repudiated any design of *stopping* the supplies. To stop the supplies, he knew as well as any man, was an expedient which could be only justified by the last extremity; he, for one, was not yet ripe for such a strong measure, and he solemnly and earnestly

smallest appearance of sincerity in the leaders of opposition to come into the only mode by which I could *tolerate* them in my service * * * *. I will, though reluctantly, go personally so far as to authorize

a message to be carried, in my name, to the Duke of Portland." With other expressions equally declarative of his dislike."—*Tomline's Life of Pitt*, vol. i., p. 294.

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protested against the imputation of any such design.*

The supplies were nevertheless postponed, while the coalition carried, by majorities of 20 and 21, a resolution expressing the confidence of the house that the king would give effect to the wishes of his faithful commons; and an address founded upon this resolution. The king, in his answer, declined to dismiss his ministers, and demanded the charge against them. Another address was proposed and carried by a diminished majority of 12. Symptoms of wavering had now appeared in the coalition camp. The result which Pitt had anticipated had occurred. The people had taken the part of the king. Addresses were pouring in from all parts of the kingdom.† At a public meeting in Westminster Hall, Fox was saluted with cries of “No great mogul!”—“No India tyrant!”—“No usurper!”—“No turncoat!”—“No dictator!”—“No Catiline!”‡ When Sir Horace Mann accompanied his house to St. James’s to present their address, he met the lord mayor, with several others of his constituents, who had

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv., col. 603.

† Pitt’s biographer found among his papers thirty-six addresses of congratulation upon his appointment as minister. He received the freedom of the city, was complimented by Wilkes, dined with

the Grocers’ Company, walked in procession to their hall, and received all the usual testimonials of civic popularity.

‡ Lord Mahon’s speech on Mr. Powys’s motion for a united and efficient administration.

come up to present an address. On seeing them he was surprised, not having been consulted on the business; but said to them, "I am among my friends." To which they answered, "We were your friends once, but you have joined with those who have set up a lord protector." Sir Horace related this anecdote in the house of commons.

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These popular demonstrations were not without their effect; the answer to the present address was no less firm than that returned to the former. Fox then postponed the Militia bill; and his majority fell to nine. He moved a representation in reply to the king's answer, and his majority dwindled to *one*.*

The crisis had now arrived—the victory was won. This division took place on the 8th of March. The necessary business of the session was rapidly despatched; and on the 25th the parliament was dissolved.

Never, since the accession of the house of Hanover, had a general election excited such enthusiasm, as that which now prevailed. An unpopular minister would probably have procured a majority; but a popular minister was irresistible. No one entertained distrust of Pitt—of Pitt, the parliamentary reformer—the son of the Earl of Chatham. They looked upon him as the stone which should break in

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxiv., col. 702.

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pieces the image of aristocratic rule ; as the young apostle of reform, who had snatched the standard of Whig principles from the hands of an exclusive party, and threw it among the nation for protection and support. No one entertained distrust of Pitt ; constituencies flocked around him with petitions ; first, that he would be himself their representative, and when this was impossible, that they might be represented by a candidate of his choice. That he would support the minister was now the unusual pledge every where extorted from the popular candidate. Every successive election tolled the knell of the late opposition. Pitt was, himself, seated for Cambridge, against John Townshend. Lord John Cavendish lost his election at York. Mr. Coke, who may be almost termed the hereditary representative of Norfolk, shared the same fate. George Byng was beaten in Middlesex ; General Conway, Earl Verney, Mr. Thomas Grenville, all disappeared from the house.

The rejection of men like these—men of ancient family, extensive possessions, and spotless character—is the strongest instance that can be given of the violence of the popular feeling ; but Pitt thought his success yet incomplete, and sullied his triumph in an attempt to crown it. While the leader of the opposition sat for a constituency so conspicuous as that of Westminster, his party might point to his position as a ready answer to any taunt of their unpopularity.

No effort, therefore, was to be spared to drive Fox from that city. The old members had been Fox and Sir Cecil Wray. Lord Hood was put forward by Pitt, and immediately stood at the top of the poll. The contest was between Wray and Fox. Upon this struggle the eyes of the whole nation were fixed—while this remained in suspense the interest of all minor elections was absorbed. Fox and Wray were the watchwords of the two parties, the words which, for successive weeks, rendered Covent-garden a scene of outrage and even bloodshed.

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The election commenced on the first of April, and Fox saw himself at the bottom of the poll ; during twenty days of polling, the most intense exertion on behalf of his party, aided by the influence of the Prince of Wales, could not alter his position ; he was still a few votes behind. In this critical state of the contest the victory was decided by a woman. The beautiful and enthusiastic Duchess of Devonshire stepped forth from the brilliant circle that had formed her sphere, and mingled with the electors as a canvasser for Fox. Political enthusiasm in so fair a form could not fail to gather converts. The duchess appeared frequently at the hustings, with her carriage full of electors ; and Fox overtook and, at length, passed his competitor. It was in vain the ministerial party redoubled their efforts ; in vain they brought forward Lady Salisbury to combat the Whig heroine.

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The duchess was found irresistible, and Fox's majority increased. At the close of the poll, on the 16th of May, he stood 235 votes above Sir Cecil Wray.

Lord Hood and Fox, therefore, were the members elected; but Corbett, the high bailiff, being in the interests of the administration, thought proper to grant a scrutiny of the votes, and thus delay the return to an indefinite extent.

The Prince of Wales had now broken all bonds of delicacy, in the manifestation of his adherence to the opposition. He met the procession which celebrated Fox's victory; gave fêtes upon the occasion, in the gardens of Carlton-house; and was conspicuous at every banquet which celebrated the victory.*

Parliament met on the 18th of May. Fox, who took his seat for Kirkwall, must have looked around him with very different feelings to those which he had enjoyed when he last sat in that house; while Pitt found himself no longer the powerless expostulator against the acts of a hostile majority, but the leader of an overwhelming party. Ten creations

* Blue and buff was still the livery of the opposition. "True blue and Mrs. Crewe," was the toast given by the prince, after supper, at an entertainment at that lady's house, at which the ladies, as well as the men, appeared dressed in the party colours. The hostess expressed her hospitality and her party zeal with equal brevity; drinking in return, "True blue and all of you."

among the peers had riveted his influence in that assembly.

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The first division in this house of commons was upon a clause in the address, returning thanks to the king for dissolving the last parliament. It was carried by a majority of 168 ; a sufficient indication of the prostration of the coalition leaders.

Throughout the first two sessions of this parliament, the Westminster scrutiny supplied the principle topics of opposition eloquence. The manifest danger of intrusting a returning officer with the power of evading the right of representation, should have influenced the house to put an end at once to a precedent so obnoxious to abuse ; but the hope of a party triumph outweighed all considerations of public safety. Large majorities supported the minister in his approval of the scrutiny ; and it appeared evident that Westminster must remain for three years unrepresented. The common sense of the country, however, revolted from such a proposition. Fox, with indefatigable perseverance, kept the subject continually before the house. The ministerial majorities gradually decreased. They had never been so great upon this as upon other questions. From 39 they now fell to 9 ; and, at last, Pitt had a majority of 38 against him. But although the house thus resolved to put an end to the scrutiny, with whimsical inconsistency, they refused to declare it illegal. A very large ma-

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majority voted with ministers upon this occasion, to prevent the vote they had already passed* being considered a decisive opposition triumph.

I pass lightly over the early contests between Pitt and the coalition parties, because they are no longer contests between Whigs and Tories. The national indignation apparent during the general election was not against Whig principles, but against the exclusive and aristocratic spirit that had attached itself to Whiggism—not against the essence but against the accident. Thus, Wilkes and all his supporters, who, continuing to hold their extreme opinions, denounced the coalition, retained the popular favour and their seats. Pitt, himself, had not renounced his Whig principles when he became the king's favourite minister; and although he found himself in an atmosphere in which they could not but languish, he still remembered that he was pledged to a parliamentary reform. Upon this subject Pitt acted with the energy worthy of a high and honourable man. Knowing the repugnance of the king to any measure which might "open the door to parliamentary reform," he intimated, in terms which, though guarded, were sufficiently intel-

* Parl. Hist., vols. xxiv. and xxv. It appears from some of the notes from the king to Mr. Pitt, published in Tomline's Life of Pitt, that George III. bitterly resented the defection of many of the usual supporters of government upon this occasion.

ligible, that any attempt on the part of his majesty to defeat his motion would be followed by his resignation. The king, regretting that he was committed to the measure, acquiesced, and promised to confine his sentiments upon the subject to his own breast.

Pitt's project of reform was to form a fund to buy up the franchises of thirty-six decayed boroughs, adding their representatives to the counties; and to form a standard of the number of houses which should be held to form a healthy borough. When the number of houses should fall below that standard, parliament would buy the franchise upon the application of the borough. The scheme also comprised a provision for the buying up the exclusive privileges of corporations, and extending the suffrage to substantial householders; and for giving representatives to four large unrepresented towns. Its author computed that it would give 100 representatives to the public; and enfranchise 99,000 householders.*

This debate called forth the natural party divisions. Lord North ridiculed the measure, the means which had been used to get up some excitement in its favour,

* Mr. Wyvil, chairman to the Yorkshire committee, with whom Mr. Pitt conferred on the formation of his plan, and who, by circular letters and public meetings, took every means of arousing public attention to this subject, gave, at one of these meetings, a "summary explanation of the principles" of the measure from which the abstract in the text is taken.

CHAP. and their total failure. He said, Mr. Pitt, listening
 XIV. for popular plaudits for his reform, and terrified by
 A. D. 1785 the popular discontents at the present state of misre-
 to 1789. presentation, might well say with the man in the
 rehearsal,

“What horrid sound of *silence* doth assail mine ear!”

In London, out of 8000 electors 300 persons had attended; and throughout the country the apathy was the same. He opposed the introduction of the bill because it was uncalled for, and because it formed a precedent for innovation and experiment. Mr. Powis, Lord Mulgrave, Mr. Yonge, Mr. Burke, Lord F. Campbell, Mr. Rolle, and Mr. Bankes, were the speakers against the motion. Bankes, the college friend and constant companion of Pitt, although avowing himself a reformer, denounced the ministerial scheme as absurd. He seized upon the real objection to the plan, and exposed, in animated terms, the inconsistency of buying a property which the spirit and letter of our laws had alike forbidden to be made the subject of traffic; of voting money to purchase what the constitution had declared should never be sold. Pitt could only reply that this was a tender point, and a necessary evil.

Mr. Wilberforce, who, as the great enemy of slavery and author of its abolition, will be regarded by distant posterity as a greater man than either Pitt

or Fox, supported the motion. Fox declared that he would not be seduced by objections to details to vote against the principle. The attorney-general eulogized the scheme ; and Mr. Dundas threw the house into convulsions of laughter, by suddenly declaring himself a sincere friend to this question. Thus we have, upon the only question which involved a party principle, a total relaxation of the usual divisions of ministerial and opposition parties, and a return to the old Whig and Tory contests. The motion was negatived by a majority of 74.

I find few instances, in the early portion of Pitt's administration, of contests which involved the rival principles of government. The debates upon his India bill, and even those upon the Irish propositions, were the contests of heterogeneous masses associated in the pursuit of power, the different sections of which occasionally accommodated each other with their votes, as Dundas voted alternately for and against parliamentary reform. Even the memorable impeachment of Warren Hastings, tempting as is the occasion to dwell on the unrivalled display of eloquence which it drew forth, and to exhibit the group of Whig orators, the greatest and best our country has produced, in their proudest moment—even this temple in our path offers no excuse for delay. The impeachment of Hastings was founded upon no party principle ; and, although the whole body of the

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coalition supported the measure, and even Pitt voted for the impeachment, Burke and Francis were probably the only men who were hearty and zealous in the cause.

In 1787 the Protestant dissenters renewed their claim to be relieved from the disabilities of the Corporation and Test acts. They had supported Pitt and denounced the coalition; and they considered themselves entitled to some consideration from the minister whom they had supported, and the sovereign whose prerogative they had defended.

The dissenters had, for some time, observed the custom of annually appointing two deputies from each of their congregations in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, for the management of their affairs. They thus formed a compact and influential body, whose assistance at any political crisis was very sensibly felt. At this general assembly it was resolved to agitate the repeal of the laws which excluded them from office under such dreadful penalties. They put forth and extensively circulated a statement of their case; and when this had made some impression upon the public mind, they instructed Mr. Beaufoy to bring the question, by motion, before the house.

The speech of Mr. Beaufoy, upon this occasion, contains a luminous exposition of the history of these acts, and a fair statement of the arguments for their abolition. "The Corporation act," said the mover,

“ declares that no person shall be elected into any corporation office who shall not, within one year before such election, have taken the sacrament according to the usage of the church of England. The Test act declares that every person who accepts a civil office, or a commission in the army or navy, and who does not, within the time prescribed by the act, take the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper according to the usage of the church of England, shall be disabled in law, to all intents and purposes whatever, from occupying any such civil office, or from holding any such military commission ; and if, without taking the sacramental qualification within the time prescribed by the acts, he does continue to occupy a civil office or hold a military commission, and is lawfully convicted, then, sir (and I beg leave to entreat the attention of the house to this most extraordinary punishment), then, he not only incurs a large pecuniary penalty, but is disabled from thenceforth for ever from bringing any action in course of law, from prosecuting any suit in any court of equity, from being guardian of any child, or executor or administrator of any person, as well as from receiving any legacy.

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After exemplifying with considerable effect the dreadful fate which this enactment prepared for any dissenter who should venture, in his zeal for his country, to bear arms in her defence ; the stigma it inflicted

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upon the merchant who having added to the kingdom's wealth, swelled its customs, increased its manufactures, and aggrandized its power, was still alienated from the common rights of citizenship, and bore the same stamp of dishonour, the same mark of rejection and infamy, as attached to men who had been publicly and judicially convicted of being perjured; the orator proceeds to show that these consequences were by no means prevented by the annual act of Indemnity.

“But I am asked, does not the act of Indemnity, (an act which for the most part is annually passed), protect from the penalties of the Test and Corporation laws, all such persons as have offended against them? Sir, if the Indemnity act does protect from the dreadful penalties of those statutes, all such persons as have executed civil offices, or have held commissions in the army or the navy without the sacramental qualification, then, what inconvenience can arise from a repeal of the statutes themselves? If by the annual Indemnity act, the execution of the law is relinquished, where is the objection to a repeal of the law itself. To preserve the claim to a test from the dissenters, when the exercise of the claim is abandoned, may answer the purposes of irritation, but cannot answer the purposes of power. The claim, in that case, operates merely as a corrosive to a wound that otherwise would heal; it stimulates

jealousies that otherwise would sleep, it agitates passions that otherwise would be at rest.

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“But, in truth, sir, the Indemnity act does not protect the dissenters from the Test and Corporation laws ; for its only effect is, that of allowing further time to those trespassers on the law against whom final judgment has not been awarded. Should, for example, a prosecution have been commenced but not concluded, the Indemnity act does not discharge the proceedings, it merely suspends them for six months ; so that if the party accused does not take the sacrament before the six months allowed by the Indemnity act shall expire, the proceedings will go on, and long before the next Indemnity act will come to his relief, final judgment will be awarded against him. Thus it appears that the Indemnity act gives no effectual protection to the dissenter who accepts a civil office or military command, for he who cannot take the sacrament at all, cannot take it within the time required by that act. The penalties of the Test act will consequently follow : he becomes incapable of receiving any legacy, of executing any trust, of serving in any court, or of appealing on any occasion for justice. He is placed in the dreadful situation of an outlaw.”

After showing the tyranny and injustice of these laws, Mr. Beaufoy proceeded to extract from their history arguments for their repeal. The Corporation

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act was imposed at a time when the kingdom was still agitated with the effects of those storms that had so lately made a wreck of the monarchy—at a time when the act of Uniformity not having passed, the dissenters, as a distinct and separate class from the established church, had not an existence. Such was the spirit of despotism in which the act was drawn, that one of its clauses gave power to the king's commissioners to remove at their discretion any corporate officers, even though they might be willing to take the oaths prescribed. This power had expired with the commission which held it; but this was the character of the law, the remnant of which was still suffered to harass the dissenters.

The Test act passed, under very similar circumstances of temporary alarm, in 1672, when the people were alarmed with an apprehension that the sovereign had formed the design of subverting the established religion of his country. They had long known that his confidential friends were Catholics, that the prime minister, Lord Clifford, and the king's brother, the heir presumptive to the throne, were of this persuasion, and that the king himself was suspected of having secretly embraced the same hostile faith. But superadded to these different circumstances of alarm, they now saw an army under Catholic officers, in the depth of winter, encamped at the gates of London. A fact so extraordinary—

which admitted but of one interpretation—filled their minds with uneasiness and extreme dismay ; and in the panic of the first impression induced the legislature to pass the law that bears the title of an act for preventing the dangers which may happen from popish recusants, but which is better known by the shorter name of the Test act. The minister, Lord Clifford, who was himself a Catholic, attempted to persuade the dissenters to oppose the bill upon the ground that its provisions were so worded as to extend to them, who were not in any respect the objects of the bill ; and that nothing could be so unjust as to subject to the penalties of the law a description of men who were not within the meaning of the law. The dissenters admitted the force of the argument, but waved their right to its benefit ; and one of the members of the city of London who was himself a dissenter, declared on their behalf that, in a time of public danger, when delay might be fatal, they would not impede the progress of a bill, which was thought essential to the safety of the kingdom ; but would trust to the good faith, to the justice, to the humanity of parliament, that a bill for the relief of dissenters should afterwards be passed. The lords and commons admitted, without hesitation, the equity of the claim. They considered the debt they had contracted to the dissenters as a debt of honour, the payment of which could not be refused ;

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and accordingly a bill for their relief was passed, but its success was defeated by the sudden prorogation of the parliament. A second bill was brought in with a view to the same object, though by a different title, in the year 1680, and passed the two houses in consequence of the same implied compact. But while it lay ready for the royal assent, Charles II., who was much exasperated with the dissenters for refusing to support the Catholics, and who always delighted to obtain the most unwarrantable ends by the most despicable means, prevailed upon the clerk of the crown to steal the bill, and overreach the parliament.

From this statement of the case the speaker passed into the more general topics of liberty of conscience—the profanation of a sacred rite to secular and unimportant objects—the inefficacy of the test to exclude the irreligious and the sceptical—the danger of vesting a clergyman with power to put a veto upon a royal appointment, and the hardship, on the other hand, of compelling a clergyman to administer the sacrament to a man whom he may know to be profligate in his principles and immoral in his conduct—the absurdity of admitting to the legislature men who were excluded from the smallest office in the customs, and the injustice of legislating at all upon subjects upon which no law can justly operate. “Thus,” concluded the speaker, “I have shown the

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various bearings of these pernicious statutes. To the judgment of the house, to your wisdom as senators, to your patriotism as citizens, to your feelings as men, I now submit the consideration of the proposed repeal, perfectly convinced that you will not permit the continuance of laws unjust in their principle, unwise in their political effect, inconsistent with all religious regards, and, therefore, every way hostile to the interests of the state.”

As this question became one of the leading subjects of party contest, a somewhat copious abstract has been given of this speech. It will be necessary to bear in mind the facts upon which the demands of the dissenters were made.

Lord North, whom a deprivation of sight had kept from the house, came down, for the first time, to lead on his followers in defence of the church. Disclaiming all bigotry and intolerance, and declaring himself a friend to the fair and free exercise of the rights of conscience, he, nevertheless, rose to protest against the repeal of an act which was the great bulwark of the constitution, and to which we owed those inestimable blessings of freedom which this nation so happily enjoyed. He denied that any indignity was offered to the dissenters by not admitting them to offices. “If government finds it prudent and necessary to confine the admission to public offices to men of particular principles, it has a

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right to adhere to such restriction ; it is a privilege belonging to all states, and all have exercised it ; all do exercise it, and all will continue to exercise it. Let us not then," he concluded, "confound toleration of religious principles with civil and military appointments. Universal toleration is established : let us be on our guard against any innovation on the church. The constitution was always in danger when the church was deprived of its rights."

From Lord North this opposition was expected, but it was confidently anticipated that Pitt would rejoin his old associates, and testify his adherence to the Whig principle of toleration. Hitherto, upon questions of party principle, Pitt had voted with the Whigs, but his conduct upon this occasion discovered that he had caught the infection by which he was surrounded, and that we must henceforward expect to find him daily withdrawing himself from the principles to which he had been attached by the Earl of Chatham. He now came forward to compliment Lord North upon his defence of the church, and refused the repeal, not as Walpole had done, because the popular prejudice was so strong that it would be impossible to effect it ; but because, in his opinion, the enactment was just and necessary. Pitt drew a distinction between political and civil liberty, and spared no pains to point out some difference in the exercise of these two rights. Unfortunately the

arguments with which he decked out this—the grand fallacy of Toryism in all questions of toleration—have not been recorded. The church and state,” he said, “were united upon principles of expediency ; and it concerns those to whom the wellbeing of the state is intrusted, to take care that the church should not be rashly demolished. The bulwark must be kept against all, and I am endeavouring to take every prudent and proper precaution. It is the right of every legislature and every state, to make those tests which they think will be most conducive to the public good, and I cannot vote for the repeal without alarming a great body of the legislature.”

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Pitt's declaration that the church and state were united upon principles of expediency, showed that he had not yet thoroughly learned the language of Toryism, and the last reason he gave for his vote was probably that which chiefly influenced him. Fox rose immediately after Pitt ; demolished his distinctions between political and civil liberty, and accused him, while he disclaimed persecution in words, of admitting the whole extent of it in principle. After reiterating and enforcing the arguments of the mover, he remarked upon his own situation with respect to the dissenters. “ No person could suspect him,” he said, “ of being biassed by any improper partiality towards the dissenters. Their conduct in a late

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political revolution was well known ; but he was willing to let them see that though they lost sight of the principles of the constitution upon that occasion, he should not, upon any occasion, lose sight of his principles of toleration." The motion was rejected by a majority of 178 to 100.

Walpole, with a strong opinion in favour of this repeal, had resisted it because the temper of the people would not bear it. Pitt found the prejudices of the king as strong as Walpole had found those of the people. George III. made the exclusion of the dissenters a point of conscience ; and where conscience only enjoins restrictions upon others, she is seldom disobeyed.

From the odium he had acquired among the dissenters by his opposition to their claims, Pitt betook himself to financial arrangements and economical reforms, measures in which the voice of the people followed him, and to which the opposition gave a candid and manly support. He was interrupted in 1788 by the sudden illness of the king, which revived a hope that had been long sleeping in the breast of Fox, and introduced a vigour and energy into the parliamentary contests. When Fox declared the absolute right of the heir apparent to take upon himself the functions of royalty during an incapacity in the king, and Pitt replied that he had no more right than any other individual subject, they each

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took the side of the question favourable to their own party: the question in dispute was a mere point of constitutional law—a point relating only to the forms, and in no manner affecting the essence of the constitution.* Fox wished the prince to assume the regency as of right, that he might be able to exert all the powers of royalty in favour of the coalition. Pitt wished the prince to receive the regency from the parliament, that he might be fettered by limitations, which, although they would not prevent him from bringing the coalition party into office, would prevent them from consolidating their power, and leave his own return to the cabinet open upon the recovery of the king.†

* The Pitt party pretended that they upon this occasion defended the principles of the revolution. Nothing could be more absurd. Fox may have been, and probably was, wrong in contending that the heir apparent has a right to exercise the functions of royalty during the incapacity of the sovereign; but such a doctrine is no more inimical to the constitutional rights of the people, than that of the hereditary succession of the crown. Fox readily admitted, that if such a right existed, it was derived from, and might be resumed by, the nation.

† Pitt did not pretend to con-

ceal his motive. “If,” he said, “persons who possessed these principles were, in reality, likely to be the advisers of the prince, in the exercise of those powers which were necessary to be given, during the present unfortunate interval, it was the strongest additional reason, if any were wanting, for being careful to consider what the extent of those powers ought to be. It was impossible not to suppose, that by such advisers those powers would be perverted to a purpose which it was, indeed, impossible to imagine that the Prince of Wales could, if he was aware of it, ever endure for a moment.”—

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During the intrigues and negotiations which occupied this brief interval of strong excitement, a circumstance occurred decisive upon the question of Thurlow's honesty. Sheridan, whose confidence in his own talent for political intrigue, frequently, as his biographer remarks, prompted him to branch off from the main body of his party upon secret and solitary enterprises of ingenuity, had conceived the idea that Thurlow, whose uncouthness so many thought honesty, was to be bought. A negotiation was commenced with the concurrence of the prince, and Fox, when he returned from Italy, where he was when the king's insanity broke forth, found his friends and the chancellor in correspondence. Fox had formed a just estimate of Thurlow's character, and he was convinced the negotiation could only end in embarrassment. "It gave him," as he wrote to Sheridan, "more uneasiness than any political thing he could remember: and it deranged all the plans he had formed for future operations." Fox was right. Thurlow received the overture with readiness, entered with apparent cordiality into the views of the Whigs, abused his colleagues to Sheridan and Fox, and only held off from an absolute engagement. But, suddenly, his manner changed; whether from his access to the king he had ascertained that a

Parl. Hist., vol. xxvii., col. 773. sentiment, that the opposite party
A mere reiteration of the common are unfit to be trusted with power.

recovery was become certain, or whether he had marked the antipathy which Fox could not disguise, and had construed it as treachery, we must be content to conjecture, but the result is certain. He suddenly broke off all negotiation, and, secure in the honour of the Whigs, rose a few hours after in the house of lords, and poured upon them one of his most violent storms of invective;* dwelling with an appearance of honest enthusiasm, which had its full effect upon the public, upon the favours he had received from the sovereign, and the debt of gratitude he owed him.†

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During this year the Earl of Mansfield retired from the court of King's Bench, and was succeeded by Sir Lloyd Kenyon, who, upon this occasion, received a peerage, an honour which Pitt lavished with no sparing hand.

George III. had early set his heart upon changing the character of the upper house. If we scrutinize the votes of the peers from the period of the revolution to the death of George II., we shall find a very great majority of the old English nobility to have been the

* "His debt of gratitude to his majesty," he said, "was ample for the many favours he had graciously conferred upon him, which, when he forgot, might God forget him!"—"Forget you," said Wilkes,

who was standing in the house, "he'll see you d——d first."

† See the correspondence on this subject in Moore's Life of Sheridan, p. 406.

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advocates of Whig principles. The splendour of their name enabled them to espouse popular doctrines without fear of being herded with the ignorant demagogues of the day : the party creed was generally as hereditary as the family estates ; and as these ancient titles were commonly created by writ, and consequently descended to heirs general, there appeared but little chance of the Whigs being extinguished in that house. As the tide of royal favour gradually drifted Pitt away from Whiggism, he also saw the advantage of having a stable and indissoluble majority of his own party in the house of peers. He wisely divined that the surest way to accomplish this object was to fill the house with men whose descent was not such as to enable them to take liberties with their dignity ; who would vote popular doctrines vulgar, and think that their new nobility compelled them to be exclusive. George III. had kept the doors of the house of peers cautiously closed against the coalition ; but he threw them wide open to Pitt. The change was to be effected, not by a sudden inundation, but by turning a streamlet into the house. Without shocking the ancient nobles the aggregate of the Pitt peers soon became considerable. Within four years after he had assumed the government Pitt could reckon 42 of his own creations in that house. The present creation, that of Sir Lloyd Kenyon, is one of the best of these. Kenyon had earned his peerage by

achieving an honourable eminence in his profession ; but he would never have obtained it if the minister had not been able to confide in his fidelity. Pitt never lost sight of this object : the chief scope of the Regency bill was to deprive the regent of an opportunity of interfering with his plan, by creating some Whig peers. The house was to be increased to such an extent that it would be almost impossible to make further additions ; and these creations were to be the rewards of Tories in the commons, and the retaining fee of Tories in the lords.

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The sudden recovery of the king destroyed at once all the budding hopes of the coalition party, and fixed them again to the opposition benches.

CHAPTER XV.

The French revolution—Effect upon the state of parties—Conduct of Burke—Speech in the house of commons and breach with Sheridan—Expiration of the parliament.

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THE petty character of the contests which had been lately carried on in parliament—contests which, for the most part, nothing but the talent of the competitors can rescue from contempt, was, in this year, entirely changed. France was no longer the ally of Toryism. That slumbering volcano, enthroned upon which despotism had sat so long secure, at length exploded: the blast was deafening and destructive; but it purified the atmosphere. Sharp and sudden was the retribution which overtook the court of France, for their first act of treachery to their natural allies the Tories of England. From Whig governments

France had always experienced war and disaster; disaster which could scarcely be compensated by the facility of the Tories in granting terms of peace. To them and their projects she was justly hostile; but when she attacked the Tories, and declared against the Tory crusade in America, she broke through all her ordinary rules of policy, and declared against her most constant friend. Soon were the seeds sown in America manifest in France. The parliament of Paris, for ages the unresisting instrument of despotism, suddenly laying claim to a will of their own—the extraordinary expedient of assembling the notables, serving no other purpose than the overthrow of the minister—the king's right of taxation disputed; the judges of his courts arrayed against him; and he alternately threatening and submitting to all that was demanded; arresting and releasing the most conspicuous demagogues; banishing and recalling his parliament; striving by sudden jerks to guide the ship that had ceased to answer to her helm; his ministers shrinking from his side, and the storm increasing—these are a few of the events that pass rapidly before us as we look towards France, and mark the return of her troops from America. But these were only the heavings that preceded the coming convulsion. It was not until the present year—when the states-general, called together for the first time for a century and a half,

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CHAP. breaking their original constitution, became a single
XV. body ; when the *tiers état*, the commons, declared
A.D. 1789 themselves the real representatives of the nation,
and 1790. assumed the exclusive power of legislation, and the
title of “The National Assembly ;” when the as-
sembly thus formed, contemning the authority of
the king, began to devise constitutions and to rege-
nerate France ; when riotous mobs grew into dis-
ciplined bands of republican soldiers, and the regular
soldiers degenerated into mobs ; when the bastille was
demolished, its officers massacred, popular vengeance
let loose, and the sway of a ferocious populace unre-
sisted ; when a voice was heard to cry “To Ver-
sailles,” and the armed multitude rolled onward in
obedience ; when that multitude returned, and the
king and queen of France entered their capital as
prisoners—it was not until the year 1789, when
these events crowded in rapid succession upon each
other, that the mountain opened, and the French
monarchy, girded by its two hundred thousand
nobles, sank into the abyss.

The tyranny had disappeared, and the nation was
to devise some new form of government. But the
French had obtained their liberty too suddenly, and
with too little trouble, to feel for it a proper respect.
Unlike England, under similar circumstances, they
had no guide to follow ; no forms of a free constitution
to retain ; no magna charta and petition of rights to

recur to as standards of rational liberty they were sufficiently emancipated from all precedent to be able to follow the most promising theory, and to lay the foundations of a perfect government. A perfect government in theory is an impossible government in practice. It can only be maintained by perfect citizens, and these, unhappily, are not to be found. When the revolutionary inundation of 1688 spread itself over Britain, it found a channel and a vent in the fosses and ditches of the old constitution, and it irrigated and fertilized the land. In France, there was no such vent: there it stagnated in the hollows and fermented into pestilence. Men, who for the first time in their lives were allowed to think upon political matters, made awkward attempts to exercise their liberty; they met in debating clubs, adopted among themselves a cant of liberty more disgusting even than the cant of fanaticism, promulgated their trashy crudities as philosophical deductions, and although these discoveries invariably turned out to be very old truths exaggerated into falsehoods, yet they were at first received as genuine, and the discoverers magnified each other as original thinkers.

Where a nation was without a government, these discussions however absurd were not without an assignable object, but these apostles of liberty were anxious to evangelize their neighbours and to ex-

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 and 1790. tend the benefit of their discoveries to all other nations. Similar societies sprung up in England, but fortunately the middle class here had been now accustomed to think upon political subjects, and they received the new philosophy either with ridicule or horror, as their terror or contempt predominated.

Events which thus absorbed the attention of the nation were not without their influence upon the professors of politics. While the contest lay between the king of France and the parliament of Paris, the Tories alone expressed their detestation of the audacity of the rebels; the Whigs regarded the day of resistance as one other spot, among the calamities and crimes which blacken human annals, on which the eye of humanity might with complacence dwell.* Fox hailed the omen as the harbinger of universal liberty; Pitt beheld the struggles of the patriots, and wished for their success. Burke alone, of all men who professed the principles of Whiggism, gazed with astonishment, and knew not whether to blame or applaud.† The scene moved on, the contest between the *tiers état* and the other estates was beheld, and Burke had resolved to blame, and Pitt had ceased to sympathize. The states-general became the national assembly, and commenced, with the assistance of Jefferson, the American minister, to

* *Vindiciæ Gallicæ.*

leville—*Prior's Life of Burke*, vol.

† Burke's Letter to Lord Char- ii., p. 42.

demolish and reconstruct; the bastille fell; the people became the captors of their king; and Burke grew more furious against those who used their liberty unwisely, than he had been against those who had made their power be felt as tyranny. Pitt, also, had perfected his recantation, and these two able men who had commenced their career with principles that would readily justify all that the national assembly had yet attempted, thus early stood forward as the champions of monarchical prerogative, and the enemies of a people in rebellion against despotism.

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On the 5th of February, 1790, Fox first alluded to this revolution in the house of commons. In a debate on the army estimates he said, that the new form which the government of France was likely to assume would, he was persuaded, make her a better neighbour, and less disposed to hostility than when she was subject to the cabal and intrigues of ambitious and interested statesmen. In resisting the estimates proposed, he acted from a motive of economy, not from fear of danger. The example of a neighbouring nation had proved that former imputations on armies were unfounded calumnies; and it was now universally known throughout Europe, that a man by becoming a soldier did not cease to be a citizen.*

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* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii., col. 330.

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On the 9th, when the debate was resumed, he predicted that in three years France would be more formidable than ever.

Upon the first occasion of Fox delivering his opinion in favour of the French revolution, Burke was not present. Upon the second he came prepared to answer. After speaking for some time upon the subject immediately before the house, he suddenly seized upon the real point of interest in the debate. "France," he said, "is, at this time, in a political light, to be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe. Whether she can ever appear in it as a leading power is not easy to determine ; but at present France is not politically existing; and most assuredly it will take up much time, to restore her to her former active existence. *Gallos quoque in bellis floruisse audivimus*, may possibly be the language of the rising generation. It is said that as she has speedily fallen she might speedily rise again. I doubt this. The fall from an height is with an accelerated velocity, but to lift a weight up to that height again is difficult, and opposed by the laws of physical and political gravitation. In a political view France is low indeed. She has lost every thing even to her name—

——— 'Jacet ingens littore truncus,
Avulsamque humeris caput, et sine nomine corpus.'

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“ I am astonished at it—I am alarmed at it—I tremble at the uncertainty of all human greatness.

“ Since the house was prorogued in the summer, much work has been done in France. The French have shown themselves the greatest architects of ruin that have hitherto existed in the world. In that very short space of time, they have completely pulled down to the ground their monarchy, their church, their nobility, their law, their revenue, their army, their navy, their commerce, their arts, and their manufactures. They have done their business for us as rivals in a way which twenty Ramilies or Blenheims could never have done.

“ In the last age we were in danger of being entangled by the example of France in a net of relentless despotism. That no longer exists. Our present danger arises from the example of a people whose character knows no medium : it is with regard to government, a danger from anarchy, a danger of being led, through admiration of successful fraud and violence, to imitation of the excesses of an irrational, unprincipled, proscribing, confiscating, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy. On the side of religion, the danger of their example is no longer in intolerance, but atheism—a foul, unnatural vice, foe to all the dignity and consolation of mankind, which seems in France, for a long time, to have been embodied into a faction, accredited and

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almost avowed. These are our present dangers from France.


“ But the very worst part of the example set is, in the late assumption of citizenship by the army, and the whole of the arrangement of their military. I am sorry that my right honourable friend has dropped even a word expressive of exultation on that circumstance. I attribute this opinion of Mr. Fox entirely to his own zeal for the best of all causes—liberty. It is with pain inexpressible I am obliged to have even a shadow of a difference with my friend, whose authority would be always great with me and with all thinking people. My confidence in Mr. Fox is such and so ample as to be almost implicit. I am not ashamed to avow that degree of docility, for when the choice is well made, it strengthens instead of oppressing our intellect. He who calls in the aid of an equal understanding, doubles his own. He who profits of a superior understanding, raises his power to a level with the height of the superior understanding he unites with. I have found the benefit of such a junction, and would not lightly depart from it. I wish almost on all occasions my sentiments were understood to be conveyed in Mr. Fox’s words, and wish, amongst the greatest benefits I can wish the country, an eminent share of power to that right honourable gentleman, because I know that to his great and masterly un-

derstanding he has joined the greatest possible degree of that natural moderation, which is the best corrective of power. He is of the most artless, candid, open, and benevolent disposition, disinterested in the extreme; of a temper mild and placable even to a fault, without one drop of gall in his whole constitution. The house must perceive from my coming forward to mark an expression or two of my best friend, how anxious I am to keep the distemper of France from the least countenance in England, where some wicked persons have shown a strong disposition to recommend an invitation of the French spirit of reform.

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“ I am so strongly opposed to any the least tendency towards the means of introducing a democracy like theirs, as well as to the end itself, that much as it would afflict me if such a thing could be attempted, and that any friend of mine should concur in such measures, *I would abandon my best friends and join with my worst enemies to oppose either the means or the end.*”

Having thus fulminated his threats of eternal separation against all his friends, who should dare to manifest any sympathy for the triumph, or indulgence for the intemperance of a people who had just overthrown the most noxious despotism in Europe, Burke passed on to an eulogium upon our own revolution of 1688. He dwelt with justice upon the prudence



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which had in that case sacrificed the man, but preserved the constitution ; but he broached an egregious fallacy when he attempted to establish the analogy of the occasions. He did not speak the sentiments of a Whig when he mourned the overthrow of the despotism of the Bourbons as the destruction of the monarchy. He did not speak as a philanthropist when he lamented the overthrow of a tyrannical hierarchy as the destruction of the church. In England these institutions were good, the man alone, who sought to subvert them, was the object of national indignation. In France the institutions were worse than the monarch ; they were the most legitimate objects of hostility.

Burke, while opposing the cause of reform, insisted, like many others, that he was a reformer, and appealed to his past career as the voucher of his title ; but he appears to have, in some degree, doubted the propriety of his former conduct, since, in the last sentence of his speech, he stated that, with regard to the constitution itself he wished few alterations in it : happy if he left it not the worse for any share he had taken in its service.*

Such were the topics of the important speech which marked Burke's defection from the Whig party. The charge of interested apostacy so generally ap-

* Parl Hist., vol. xxviii., col. 363.

plicable to men who suddenly change their political views was not yet, however, incurred by Burke. Burke, although a Whig from political connexion—from a coincidence of views upon certain great questions, and from a disapproval of the Tories, was, nevertheless, never, in his heart, a friend to popular government. With the most extended views of philanthropy he hated the people. His philosophic mind shrunk from a contact with the vulgar. To him nothing was so disgusting as the mob. He would labour for the advantage of the crowd, but he must be allowed to dispense his blessings from above; and if the recipients would refrain from dictating what he should give he scarcely required their thanks.* So genuine an aristocrat in heart was, with great difficulty, kept within the pale of Whiggism. It is difficult to conjecture how he could have persuaded himself to espouse the cause of the revolted Americans; it is hardly to be conceived how he could reconcile himself to the formation of their republic. Upon all other subjects he was consistent with the general tenour of his feelings. Economical reform he laboured to effect—it was a boon thrown to the people. Triennial parliaments he strenuously op-

* “Satis est equitem mihi plaudere,” was a sentiment in which he avowedly concurred. See his ap-
 peal from the new to the old Whigs.

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posed—these would have brought the people nearer to himself. Religious disabilities he was ready to remove ; for whatever philosophy sanctioned, and aristocratic feeling did not forbid, Burke was willing to accord : but reform in parliament gave power to the people : and even the possession of office under a cabinet pledged to reform could only extort from him a sullen and reluctant neutrality. The French revolution was an event which, under any circumstances, would have taxed to the utmost Burke's powers of compliance. In earlier times he might have forgotten all scruples, in his attachment to his party and friendship for the men with whom he had acted through life, and he might have embraced the first republicans of France as he had embraced the republicans of America. But Burke was now grown old and less compliant ; he had become less powerful with his party ; less an object of wonder in the house. He knew that the Prince of Wales neglected his society for that of Sheridan ; and he had cause to conjecture that, in the arrangements contemplated during the king's illness, the companion of the prince was to have taken precedence in his office. Burke also was poor ; he had passed the greater portion of his life on the opposition benches, and he was at present without hope of removal. These are not motives that would have determined the conduct of such a man as Burke ; but they are considerations which

will have a, perhaps involuntary, effect in the deliberations of the most honourable mind. They would strengthen the view he would naturally take of the question, and diminish his incentives to compliance with his party.

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When Burke sat down, after the delivery of his philippics against the French revolution, Fox rose. All eyes were turned upon the great party chief, and expectation strained to hear how he would treat the defection of his friend. He deplored, in terms of deep feeling, the necessity that had arisen for differing with one whose friendship was so dear to him; he passed a high eulogium upon his virtues and his talents, he hailed him as his master, and declared that all the political knowledge he had gained from books, all he had gained from science, all he had gained from knowledge of the world and experience of mankind, was not greater than that he had acquired from the conversation and instruction of the friend who now left his side. He vindicated himself from the charge of participating in the wild and visionary projects of all the rabid revolutionists both of France and England; but he, at the same time, defended the revolution itself, avowed a community of feeling with its authors, and denounced only those who would abuse the liberty it had created. He insisted that there was a strong analogy between the present revolution in France and that of 1688 in

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England, and that if excesses had occurred during the former that had not disgraced the latter, it was because there was so much despotism to destroy in France, and there had been so little that required destruction in England. He reserved, however, the full discussion of the question to some future time, cautiously abstaining from any topic that could widen the breach, and evidently looking forward to some private arrangement by which it might be closed.

But Burke had taken his party, and from this moment he appears, far from being actuated by motives of tenderness or even delicacy towards his former friends, to have sought out opportunities for stating and magnifying their points of difference. At this moment, the approval or disapproval of the French revolution was a mere speculative question, which might divide the opinions of able men, but could scarcely be expected to sever sincere friendships, or separate political allies; yet, when Sheridan arose and defended the revolution, concluding his speech with an expression of his reverence for the rights of men, Burke replied with violence, that “Henceforth he and his honourable friend, *as he had been accustomed to call him*, were separated in politics.” He kept his word—thenceforward Burke could never be persuaded to meet or speak of Sheridan as a friend.

Sheridan’s declaration, as it was supposed to ex-

press the sentiments of the heir-apparent, was considered as important as that of Fox. It is said, that when it was known that a breach between Fox and Burke must occur, Sheridan wrote a short note to Carlton House for instructions. "Follow Fox," was the laconic reply.

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The alarm occasioned by the acts of the revolutionists was early seen in the house of commons. The country-gentlemen deserted the Whigs in a body. They who had been so liberal in the former year, that the repeal of the Test act had only been rejected by a majority of 20, now voted in a mass against it; and so well did Pitt note the temper of his supporters, that he abandoned all coquetry upon the subject of parliamentary reform, and opposed the agitation of the question.

At the close of the session of 1790, this parliament expired.

CHAPTER XVI.

Review of the last parliament—Biographical anecdotes of John Scott—Of Henry Addington—Of Charles Grey—Of William Wyndham—Of Samuel Whitbread—Of Erskine—Leaders of the democratic party—Reflections on the French revolution—Meeting of the new parliament—Rupture between Burke and Fox—The Whigs decide against Burke.

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THE election of a new parliament affords a halting-place whence we may review the state of the party contests ; a point of view whence we may look back upon the time we have passed, and mark the changes produced upon the combatants.

Seven years of power had changed Pitt from an adventurous and ardent youth to an experienced and calculating politician ; from a democrat, whom even Tooke could trust, to a Tory, in whom even George III. could find no fault. Seven years of op-

position had seen the decline of Burke's influence, and the extinction of his Whiggism. The time had not passed unnoted either over Fox and Sheridan. It had produced that full maturity to their powers and to their fame whence men begin to look for a decline. Throughout this period we have seen Pitt sitting between his humble instruments, Dundas and Yonge, backed by a host of obedient supporters, the representatives of treasury boroughs and courtier peers ; and having upon the cross benches a goodly array of country-gentlemen, who, though not to be depended upon like his disciplined troops, were very serviceable while they could be retained as volunteers. Opposite sat the triumvirate of Whiggism, Fox, Burke, and Sheridan, backed by a slender troop of followers ; but these all picked men ; men who had joined the Whigs either because patriotism was the sole motive of their conduct, or because they possessed a consciousness of ability to acquire popularity, and to storm the cabinet at the head of the people. Such were the parties within the house, while Tooke and his democrats raged without. But in each of these parties some change had occurred ; and, while the leaders were manifesting symptoms of age, and in one instance giving suspicion of desertion, others were rising into reputation, ready to supply their places and perpetuate the contest.

Upon the Tory side the development of talent

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was not very great. Pitt did not want it. Where parties are equally balanced talent will decide the preponderance; but the minister probably found that one eloquent speech, when multiplied by the ciphers of a large majority, was sufficient for every purpose. Among the most conspicuous, however, of those who became conspicuous in the service of this party, was John Scott, whose perseverance and devotion have since been rewarded by an earldom. Contemporary accounts of public characters are seldom correct. John Scott is described to have been the third son of a tradesman of no great opulence at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was born in the year 1749, and, having obtained an exhibition from the Grammar-school at Newcastle, was entered at Oxford in 1767. At this university he appears either to have manifested talent or propitiated favour, since we are told that his promotion was prevented by an elopement and improvident marriage. After this union, which was equally offensive to both the families, it was determined that the *lost young man*, as his brother called him, should be entered as a student at the Middle Temple. Here he continued for some time in very straitened circumstances, until, at length, accident threw into his hands a very important case upon the circuit. It now appeared that, while he waited his opportunity, he was diligently qualifying himself to improve it. His superiority, however,

was more apparent as a lawyer than as a speaker. In the court of chancery he was timorous in his address, and submissive to the court. Thurlow, who had just assumed the chancellorship, was interested in behalf of one who bowed himself so meekly before his footstool. He soon manifested great partiality to Scott, and even offered him a mastership in chancery ; a situation which, as it was looked upon as the grave of ambition, he ventured very thankfully to decline. The barrister was quite right. It soon became known that he had the ear of the court, and his practice prodigiously increased. Thurlow remained his friend ; in 1783 he obtained for him a patent of precedence ; and in the same year Scott was returned to parliament for Weobly, a borough under the influence of Lord Weymouth. Upon entering parliament he attached himself to the party of his patron, and made his first essay in a speech against Fox's India bill ; a speech which was remarkable neither for point nor argument, and which appeared to justify the remark of Pitt to Thurlow, that he could see nothing in his protégé. Scott continued to attend the house, and to speak in behalf of his party, but without any extraordinary success. His speeches, however, although they never pretended to eloquence, were always characterized by considerable tact ; and his reputation at the bar procured him attention in the house. In 1788 he was appointed

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solicitor-general. It is said that when, upon this occasion, the attorney and solicitor general kissed hands upon their appointments, Mr. Scott wished to decline the customary honour of knighthood, "Pho, pho, nonsense," said the king, "I will serve them both alike:" and the lawyer was obliged, reluctantly, to submit to the accolade.

Another man risen into consequence with the Tory party, was Henry Addington, by the favour of Pitt, speaker of the late house of commons. Addington was the son of an eminent physician, who being especially skilful in cases of insanity, had steadied Pitt's political faith during the king's illness by his sanguine anticipations of recovery. He was as much attached to politics as to physic,* but, as his account of an abortive negotiation between the Earl of Chatham and the Earl of Bute proves, he was not

* It is related of him that being called in to consult upon the case of a person very dangerously ill, he and the apothecary proceeded together towards the sick man's chamber, while the family awaited in great suspense their opinion below. After a very long and painful pause, the brother of the patient was despatched to learn the cause of the delay. He found the doctor still on the staircase,

absorbed in an argument with the physician, who was a Foxite, upon the subject of the India bill. "Dear sir," said the young man, impatiently, "there is no one in this house denies the transcendent merits of the heroes of Burton-Pymment (the Pitts), but my poor brother will, I am afraid, be dead, before you get through the India bill. Upon entering the chamber, the event he dreaded had occurred

equally successful in their treatment. He retired from practice with a fortune of 100,000*l*.

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His son was born about the year 1756. He was fortunate enough to be intrusted to a tutor who, discovering in him the germs of considerable ability, advised that he should be taken from his care, and placed at a public school. Winchester was chosen, and thence he proceeded to Brazen-nose college, Oxford, where we have no record either of his studies or his proficiency. His father's politics had acquired for him the friendship of the Earl of Chatham and obtained for the son the intimacy of William Pitt. Their pursuits were the same, for Addington was become a member of the Inner Temple, and their companionship now became strict. When his friend suddenly started from this sphere, and soared towards the highest offices of state, Addington followed with a feebler flight. The recordership of Devizes, obtained for him by his friend, assisted him to a seat in parliament for that borough, and opened to him the path to preferment. In 1789 when, on the occasion of some alterations in the cabinet, Mr. Grenville was taken from the chair of the house of commons to be made secretary of state, Addington was his successor. He filled his office with a proper dignity, but did not forget his obligations to the minister, when the house being in committee enabled him to mix in the debate.

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The circumstance of Addington's powers having proved clearly unequal to the high station which he achieved, will be unfortunate for his reputation : the contemporaries of his feeble government deny him any ability whatever, and admirers he had none. But to this judgment the station he held is a sufficient refutation. A fortunate concurrence of circumstances may give the highest honours to one not possessed of the highest talents, but no plebeian ever acquired political distinction in England without talent which would have rendered him eminent in an ordinary station.

These two members of the house of commons were the most prominent acquisitions of the Tory party in that assembly. On the Whig side there are higher names to introduce.

The Honourable Charles Grey was by far the most valuable of the recent acquisitions to the Whig party. Descended of an old Norman family which had produced many men illustrious in the field and in the senate, heir to the large possessions of his house and to the parliamentary interest these gave, and possessed talent of a very high order, Charles Grey commenced his career with every advantage that could promise success. In 1786, soon after he had become of age, the accession to the peerage of the Earl of Beverley left a vacancy in the representation of Northumberland. This was the county in which

the interest of his family peculiarly lay, and Mr. Grey was returned without opposition. Upon entering the house of commons he placed himself behind the bench whence Fox and Burke and Sheridan spoke to present and to future ages. He had arrived upon the arena of party contest, at a time, when Toryism was growing more faint in the coalition, and when the zeal of opposition gave a daily increase to the vigour of Whiggism. He attached himself especially to Fox, and when he made his first essay as a speaker, which he did in the debate on the treaty of commerce with France, he received a high and merited compliment from his political chief.* This speech appears to have established his importance with his party. We find him, soon after, taking a conspicuous part in the debate upon the Prince of Wales's debts, and calling forth the immediate attention and reply of the minister. From this time he appears in every debate of importance, zealous in the cause he had espoused, and forward upon every occasion where a Whig principle could be asserted. He was listened to with respect by the house, and cherished by the older chiefs of his party as a valuable ally and a worthy successor.

The admiration of Fox and the attentions of Burke were not misplaced. The character of a

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxvi., col. 471—507.

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politician cannot be finally judged while he exists ; but if the general voice of his contemporaries can avail with posterity, the historian of a future generation will point to Grey as a name second to none among the best and most illustrious of England's ministers. An undeviating consistency of principle which none of the lights of the last generation could boast, a solidity of character which many of them so lamentably wanted, unremitting assiduity in his attendance in parliament, and a persevering zeal in the service of his country ; these are qualities which entitle him to our unqualified respect, and call for a repetition of the applause which was drawn from us by the patriotism, the steadiness, and the consistency of the Byngs. But Grey added the high talent, the power of oratory, the political empire, which they did not possess, and compels our admiration as strongly as our reverence. But we are too near the events of this statesman's career to estimate his character with confidence. If we would view a temple correctly, we may not stand beneath its shadow.

Similar to Charles Grey in ability, but differing in every other characteristic, was William Wyndham, who sat by his side upon the opposition benches, and now shone as one of the minor stars in the Whig firmament. Wyndham inherited a small patrimony in Norfolk, and after Eton, Oxford, and a course of

travel had entitled him to be ambitious, he applied himself to acquire notoriety as an opponent of the North administration. Zealous in any cause he undertook, and warm and violent in his temperament, he was soon successful. At county meetings, and at public dinners, from the hustings at elections, from the tops of carts and waggons, at popular assemblies in town and in country, Wyndham poured forth his indignation against the robbers of our rights, and the spoilers of our wealth, the corrupters of our constitution, and the despots of our people.

These oratorical exercises were interrupted by a design of visiting the North Pole. An expedition, in which Nelson took part, was at this time, despatched by government. Wyndham accompanied it, but finding the sea sickness intolerable, he was put on shore in Norway, and returned home in a Greenland whaler.

In 1782 Wyndham was returned to parliament for Norwich, and, consistently with his former declarations, took his station among the Whigs. Here he soon discovered that he had profited by his practice of public speaking. In the words of Earl Grey, he appeared "a man of great, original, and commanding genius, with a mind cultivated with the richest stores of intellectual wealth, and a fancy, winged to the highest flights of a most captivating

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imagery.”* This, however, must be received with abatement as a posthumous panegyric. He had certainly an eloquent although a very metaphysical style of speaking ; but his reputation and his oratory were the result of some experience and practice in the house.

In 1783 Wyndham was appointed principal secretary to the Earl of Northington, who was then lord lieutenant of Ireland. The government of Ireland was, at that time, understood by both parties to be the proper theatre of unquestioned jobbing and corruption. When about to leave England he called upon his friend Dr. Johnson, and in the course of conversation, lamented that his situation would compel him to sanction practices he could not approve. “Don’t be afraid, sir,” replied the doctor, “you will soon make a very pretty rascal.” Wyndham was much esteemed by Johnson, for he was a thoroughly accomplished man ; his mind was stored with the most varied information, and his conversation was perfumed by the sweets he had collected.

Johnson was accustomed to say, that even in the regions of literature (he meant London) Wyndham was *inter stellas Luna minores* ; and many other of his contemporaries, have testified to the extent of his acquirements.†

* Gentleman’s Mag., vol. lxxx. ham (prefixed to his Speeches)—

† Amyot’s Memoir of Wynd- Gent. Mag., vol. lxxx.

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Ill health, or as his biographer would insinuate, conscientious scruples, caused him to resign his secretaryship, and, in the following year, he appears in the house of commons seconding Burke's motion for a representation on the state of the nation. Henceforward we find him frequently taking part in the debate, not concentrating the attention of the house—for what star could hope for admiration in a hemisphere where so many rival suns were already raining light?—but gradually making his way upwards, and speaking with ability and effect.

To this parliament also, was returned Samuel Whitbread, who soon proved himself no mean acquisition to the Whigs. He was born in 1758, the son of a rich brewer of London, and was educated at Eton and Oxford. He made the tour of Europe under the tutelage of the celebrated William Coxe, whose biographical labours have been so frequently quoted in these pages, and who afterwards dedicated one of his works to his pupil. Soon after his return to England, he married the daughter of Sir Charles, afterwards Earl Grey, and was at once enrolled among the Whig aristocracy. During the general election of this year, he became a candidate for Bedford, in which borough and county he possessed large landed property; and, after a sharp contest, he was returned. His eloquence was by no means

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brilliant, but his speeches were replete with fact and argument: he addressed himself to the judgment of his hearers, and he succeeded in convincing them, because he made it evident that he was himself convinced.

Erskine's name can no longer be delayed: it must have appeared long ago, had the house of commons been the chosen scene of his triumphs. The Honourable Thomas Erskine, third son of the Earl of Buchan, was born in the year 1750. In his youth, he appears to have manifested all the impetuous enthusiasm which marked his later character. He entered with ardour into the naval service, to which he had been brought up, and outstripped the rules of the service in the rapidity of his promotion. But, in his 18th year, he grew disgusted with the navy and obtained a commission in the army, proceeded with his regiment to Minorca, and served there for three years. An imprudent marriage,* and a very restricted fortune, left him neither taste nor opportunities for pursuing

* The contemporaneous examples of Scott and Erskine appear to countenance the advice given by Thurlow to a father who asked the chancellor's advice as to his son's education for the bar. "Let your son," said Thurlow, "spend his own fortune, marry, and spend

his wife's. Then let him be called to the bar; he cannot fail to succeed." Erskine and Scott were placed at once in the proper predicament, without the trouble and delay attendant upon spending the two fortunes:

this his second profession. In 1772 he returned to England, and resided for some time in London, where he speedily became distinguished in society. In the company of Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and other distinguished characters who were accustomed to assemble at the house of Mrs. Montague, he tested his own powers ; and among these celebrated men, he attracted, says Boswell, particular attention. It is said that the advice of his mother determined him ultimately to apply himself to the law. The custom which prevails at Cambridge, of granting a very early degree to the connexions of noblemen, shortened Erskine's road to the bar ; he was called in the year 1778, and, unlike nearly all of his illustrious predecessors in the same career, immediately started into practice. An acquaintance with Captain Bailey, then under prosecution for a libel, placed in his hand a case of considerable public interest, and the use which Erskine made of this opportunity established his reputation. His speech on this occasion, in the lucid order of its arrangement, the intimate admixture of argument and passion, the energy of its language, and the vehemence of its invective, yields to none of those masterpieces which emanated from him in the zenith of his fame.

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The reputation he acquired by this first effort was sustained by his after performances. In all constitu-

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tional cases, where the liberty of the subject was in danger or the libel law of the judges was to be denounced, Erskine was retained, and the courts of Westminster Hall teemed with the triumphs of his eloquence.

Upon the formation of the coalition ministry he was introduced by Fox into parliament for the treasury borough of Portsmouth, and throughout the contest upon the India bill, he strenuously supported his political patron. It soon, however appeared that the house of commons was not his element. The splendid declamation which had aroused the passion and led captive the judgment of juries, was heard with indifference by men accustomed to the voice of eloquence ; he no longer carried his audience with him, and his confidence and his powers together fell. Upon the dissolution which followed Pitt's assumption of the government Erskine surrendered his seat ; nor does he again appear as a speaker in the house of commons until after the meeting of the parliament, which was now in process of election.

The services of Erskine to the Whig party, and these were many and great, were performed rather in the courts of law than in the house of commons. To his defences against prosecutions for libel, and especially to his speech in defence of the Dean of St. Asaph, which Mr. Fox repeatedly declared to be the finest argument in the English language, we hold

the universality of the feeling which forced through the legislature Mr. Fox's Libel bill. His proudest position was as a Whig advocate: to see him in his pride of place, he should be viewed as the defender of those mistaken patriots with whose blood Pitt attempted to celebrate his full alliance with Toryism.

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The democratic party which clamoured without, had also acquired increase of strength and additional leaders. The leaders, or rather the organs, of this party, are usually either calculating knaves, or reckless enthusiasts. Wilkes, the first of the race who now proceeded through the hissings and groans of the multitude to the hustings in Covent-garden, to vote for Hood and Tooke,* was an unmitigated scoundrel. Horne Tooke's honest enthusiasm was beginning to ebb, and there was rather a suspicious sediment left when it vanished. Cartwright proceeded as he had commenced, intent upon the one object of his life, the one idea which perpetually possessed him, the absolute right of personal representation. John Jebb, whom Cartwright valued as the friend of his bosom, and proposed as the pattern of his conduct,† had espoused the same theory, and pursued it with a zeal equal in purpose, although not in efficiency, to the dogged perseverance of the great reformer. Thelwall, who having in early life passed through

* Mrs. Sheridan's Letter to her Husband, printed in Moore's Life of Sheridan. † Life of Major Cartwright.

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the various situations of a shopman, a poet, an actor, a tailor's apprentice, and an attorney's articled clerk; and who, during all these transitions, had continued a determined Tory, renounced his Toryism, and brought the aid of his activity and inflexible resolution to the same cause. Gerald—poor Gerald! the favourite pupil of Dr. Parr, the elegant scholar, skilled in the sciences, gifted with eloquence, thoughtless, generous, and unsuspicious, who spent his talents as he dissipated his fortune; he also fixed his enthusiasm upon the new creed. Muir, Palmer, Skirving, Margarot, Hardy, and many others, might be enumerated as eminent either for the influence they possessed, or the persecution they suffered.*

Such were the three divisions of politicians who, at the meeting of the parliament of 1790, stood prepared to renew the contest. This parliament, elected during the alarm, inspired by the successes of the French, soon proved themselves, by their votes, as favourable to the minister as the last.

Within a few days of the meeting of the parliament, Burke put forth his celebrated work, the "Reflections upon the French Revolution;" the work in which he proclaimed aloud his difference with his party, and made his defence before the country.

* There is considerable information upon these early reformers collected in the recently-published Life of Thelwall.

All that extreme care, highly-polished style, and vivid imagery, could accomplish was effected; nothing that genius, knowledge, or observation, could supply was omitted, to give popularity to this work. Its success was equal to the author's hopes, 30,000 copies were sold in England alone. Nearly all the crowned heads in Europe awarded him their thanks. The Emperor of Germany and Catherine of Russia sent their ministers to express their approbation. Stanislaus of Poland sent him his likeness on a gold medal. And George III. had a number of copies bound, and distributed them among his friends, saying, "That it was a book which every gentleman ought to read."—Such are the honours in store for those who advocate the right divine of kings.

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It may still, however, be questioned, whether this work was very advantageous to the party for whom it was written. It was well calculated to kindle or sustain the enthusiasm of the Tories; readers, whose zeal required no spur: it may, perhaps, have frightened a few timorous Whigs. But it called forth in answer the "*Vindiciæ Gallicæ*," and the "Rights of Man;" the first the offspring of an intellect that might stand unabashed even before that of Burke; the last, a fountain of evil, whose poison would penetrate where Burke's antidote could not follow. To an inquiring Whig, whose head was dizzy with the gorgeousness of the reflections, the answer of Mr.

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Mackintosh was a sufficient restorative ; but the ragged democrats, to whom, in tens of thousands, the "Rights of Man" was distributed, knew nothing of the "Reflections" beyond its title, while they greedily devoured the licentiousness and impiety it had called forth.*

Fox and Sheridan every where expressed their disapprobation of the principles defended by Burke. The feebleness of the tie which bound Burke and Fox together, was manifested during the first session of the new parliament. When a violent petition, reflecting upon the constitution of the house of commons, was presented from Horne Tooke, Burke was the first to call for punishment upon the libeller, and could hardly be restrained by Pitt from making some intemperate motion upon the subject.† The occasion of the introduction of a bill to repeal some of the sanguinary statutes which inflicted the penalties of high treason upon Catholics, discovered Fox and Burke at variance upon the principles of toleration ; Fox maintaining that a state had no right whatever to inquire into the religious opinions of the subject on any occasion, and Burke asserting that it had an uncontrollable superintending power

* A common toast at the club to Mr. Burke for the discussion he dinners at this time was, "Thanks has provoked."

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii., col. 921.

in all cases and on all occasions.* Burke was now, having made one move backwards, gradually retreating at all points, and apparently seeking an opportunity of open quarrel. This, the Whigs took a method of avoiding. Fox never scrupled to harangue in favour of the French revolution; in the debate upon Mr. Baker's motion respecting the armament against Russia, he declared that he admired the new constitution of France, and considered it altogether as the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity, in any time or country.† Burke, upon this, as upon other similar occasions, rose to reply, but his voice was immediately drowned in loud cries of question from the opposition benches, and after a vain attempt to obtain a hearing, he was obliged to give way to the division.

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From this moment an explosion, although it might be procrastinated, could not be avoided. There was in the conduct of Burke, as Fox justly remarked, “manifest eagerness to seek a difference of opinion and anxiety to discover a cause of dispute.” The debates upon the Quebec Government bill; a bill which settled the constitution of Canada, fur-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxviii., col. 1375.

† Parl. Hist., vol. xxix., col. 249.

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nished the occasion. Fox objected to many portions of the bill, especially to that which introduced into the Canadian legislature an estate analogous to our house of peers. Such a question naturally introduced a discussion of the principles of government. On the morning of the 21st of April, the day appointed for the recommitment of the Quebec bill, Mr. Fox, for the last time, paid Mr. Burke a visit accompanied by a common friend. Mr. Burke talked over with them the plan of all he intended to say, opened the different branches of his argument and explained the limitations which he meant to impose on himself. Fox in return, entered with candour into a statement of the prospects of the Whigs and of circumstances which appeared to promise them a return to office.* The two friends walked down to the house together, where they found that Sheridan

* The newspapers of the day had stated, that while the subject of the Russian armament was under discussion, the king had been heard to say, that he was not so wedded to Mr. Pitt, as not to be very willing to give his confidence to Mr. Fox, if the latter should be able, in a crisis like the present, to conduct the government of the country with greater advantage to the country. Burke, in his appeal from the new to the old Whigs, cites a passage from the "Argus" to this effect, without confirming or denying it : but it is very improbable. If true, it conveys one of the most severe reflections yet cast upon the character of George III. Was he so ready to abandon the patriot he had debauched ?

had adjourned the debate.* Upon its resumption, at an after date, it appeared from some observations made by Mr. Michael Angelo Taylor that the Whigs were still determined to prevent Burke from speaking on the French revolution. He, nevertheless, commenced the speech he had prepared, but was immediately interrupted by the members by whom he was surrounded, and who, at the conclusion of every sentence, rose one after the other to call him to order. Persevering in spite of these interruptions, a formal motion was at length made, that dissertations on the French revolution were irrelevant to the question before the house. Upon this motion the final separation between Burke and his party took place. Fox supported the motion, and accused Burke of favouring the insinuation which had been made against him that he was an advocate of republican principles. He set forth the absurdity of friends, who agree upon all practical points, separating upon a mere abstract and historical question. He was sorry to find that his friend, who during the American war, had declared that he could not draw a bill of indictment against a whole people, had since learned to draw such a bill of indictment, and to crowd it with all the technical epithets of abuse which disgraced our statute-book. He had been

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* Annual Register.

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taught by his friend that no revolt of a nation was caused without provocation ; he felt a joy ever since the constitution of France became founded on those same rights of man on which the British constitution was founded, and not all the eloquence of his friend, either in writing, or in debate, could alter his opinion. These sentiments he was prepared to defend whenever the house should set apart a day for the discussion, but he objected to the introduction of such a debate in an incidental manner.

Fox having thus imitated the conduct he condemned, the house could no longer refuse to hear Burke in reply. He commenced in a grave and governed tone of voice. He complained that his words and his conduct throughout had been misrepresented, and a personal attack had been made upon him from a quarter he never could have expected, after a friendship and an intimacy of more than two-and-twenty years. Thence he burst forth into the subject which had now so entirely possessed him, the French revolution. The readers of history are already sufficiently acquainted with Burke's opinions upon this subject—it is the manner in which he made them the cause of rupture with his party with which we have now to do. Giving the reins to his passion, he plunged with such reckless violence into the subject, that, at last, his vehemence startled even himself, and, stopping suddenly, he drew himself up in an

attitude of calmness, and, addressing the chairman, said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness.” He then alluded to his situation—standing in opposition to the friends of a long life. He spoke of former differences, upon the reform question especially. He had differed with Mr. Fox upon several occasions; but, in the course of their long acquaintance, no one difference of opinion had ever before, for a single moment, interrupted their friendship. It certainly, he said, was indiscretion at any period, but especially at his time of life, to provoke enemies, or give his friends occasion to desert; yet, if firm and steady adherence to the British constitution placed him in such a dilemma, he would risk all; and, as public duty and public prudence taught him, with his last words exclaim, “Fly from the French constitution!”

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Here Mr. Fox said, “There is no loss of friendship.”

“Yes,” replied Burke, turning to confront him, “there is loss of friendship. I know that is the price of my conduct; I have done my duty at the price of my friend.—*Our friendship is at an end.*”

So sudden, so violent a renunciation of an ancient friendship, can only be accounted for by ascribing it to an ebullition of temper, or a determination to secede from an unprofitable party. Modern writers

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are accustomed to reject all suspicion of interested motives in statesmen, as illiberal. They extend to them when dead the same courtesy which they maintain towards each other when alive, assuming that they are indifferent to that which all other classes most eagerly seek. But, protesting against so mischievous a delicacy, we would not, nevertheless, represent Burke as materially influenced by pecuniary interest. Disappointment and adversity had soured his temper ; he complained, even in this speech, that, latterly, Fox's visits had been rare and short, and his confidence in him had been shaken. It could not have been a sense of duty that caused him to declare in public, "Our friendship is at an end ;" for they had differed before upon practical points, even upon points which Burke deemed vital ; nay, Burke had, himself, in deference to the opinion of his friend, left the house when these were discussed ; yet, these differences "never, for a single moment, interrupted their friendship," a friendship which snapped with the strain of a pettish word and a speculative opinion.*

Fox, when he heard himself included in the renun-

* Yet Burke could declaim any thing, superior to the love of eloquently upon the subject of one's country, the animating soul of friendship. "It is," he said in whence originated every other his speech against the abatement virtue." of Hastings's impeachment, "if

ciation which had before gone forth against Sheridan, was deeply affected. Manly as was his bearing, and commanding as was his eloquence, Charles Fox was a man of a warm heart and sensitive feelings. Upon this occasion his voice faltered, and the house beheld him shed tears as he attempted to recal the departed friendship of his old associate. But as he proceeded in his reply, he seemed to remember the absence of all cause for the anathema pronounced ; he expostulated with Burke for turning his eloquence upon his party as well as upon his friend ; repeated his opinion upon the French revolution, recapitulated the events of the career they had pursued together, and concluded by an offer of oblivion of the past, which was conciliating, but by no means submissive.

Burke's rejoinder, repudiating all such pretences of friendship, seemed to manifest an anxiety not to spoil the quarrel, and was eminently successful.

When the breach became thus public and irreparable, a meeting of the Whig party took place to decide between the two chiefs, and in the Morning Chronicle of the 12th of May, 1791, appeared the following account of the decision :

“ The great and firm body of the Whigs of England, true to their principles, have decided on the dispute between Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke ; and the former is declared to have maintained the pure doctrines by which they are bound together, and upon

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which they have invariably acted. The consequence is, that Mr. Burke retires from parliament.”*

Burke did not retire from parliament, but he absented himself upon ordinary occasions, coming down to the house occasionally to support any local or petty amendment, or to oppose any enlarged measure of reform.

* This paragraph is inserted as a species of leading article, a feature in a modern newspaper which was only beginning to appear in that of 1791. Burke cites this exposition of the sentence of the party he had deserted, in his “Appeal from the new to the old Whigs.” We have seen, in the course of this work, that no distinguished Whig has hitherto deserted his party without appealing to the old Whigs as the true Whigs,

and abusing the Whigs of his own day. Burke is no exception. Pulteney thought Walpole a degenerated new Whig. Burke appeals to Walpole as an old Whig, and brings the charge of novelty and degeneracy against Fox and his friends. There have been deserters since Burke’s day who would appeal to Fox as an old Whig, and future generations of apostates will probably find future generations of old and new Whigs.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Fox's Libel bill—Dismissal of Thurlow—Political clubs—Their insignificance—Commencement of the Tory war for the re-establishment of the Bourbons—Opposition of the Whigs—Mr. Grey's motion in favour of parliamentary reform—Prosecutions for high treason against parliamentary reformers—Hardy—Horne Tooke—Thelwall—Secession of the Duke of Portland and his adherents—Zeal of the apostate Whigs in the cause of Toryism—Prevalence of high Tory sentiments among Pitt's followers—Death of Burke—Mr. Grey renews his motion for parliamentary reform—Biographical anecdotes of George Canning—Of Tierney—Of Sir Francis Burdett—Corruption of Pitt's government—Mr. Grey's motion of 1798—Catholic emancipation question arising out of the union with Ireland—Advocated by Pitt—Refused by the king—Resignation of Pitt.

IN 1792 Mr. Fox succeeded in his attempt to restore the trial by jury in cases of libel, a privilege of which the subject had been, for many years, in effect, deprived. Twenty years before a similar attempt had been made by Burke, and had failed. The Declaratory bill now passed the commons with the approbation of Pitt; escaping an insidious attempt at amendment, by Sir John Scott, in the commons, and the open opposition of Thurlow in the lords. Thurlow made the modest proposition that, if the

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judge should be dissatisfied with a verdict of acquittal, he should have power to order a new trial.*

This was the only attempt in which Fox was, this year, successful. When he proposed to repeal some of the obsolete penal laws against the dissenters, Burke objected that those people were little entitled to the favour of parliament, as they held up the proceedings of the French as examples for imitation.† In an amendment moved to the ministerial address upon the proclamation against seditious doctrines, he found many even of his own party, and, among others, Wyndham, following in the trail of Burke, and voting with the minister.

In the lords a singular scene occurred. During the progress of a bill for continuing the sinking fund, a bill which had met with no opposition from the Whigs, Thurlow suddenly left the woolsack, loaded his colleagues with every epithet of abuse, denounced the bill, and, dividing the committee against its principal clause, was beaten only by a majority of six. He re-enacted the same scene in a debate upon a bill for encouraging the growth of timber in the new

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxix., col. 1536. There are few things more impudent than this upon record.

† Annual Register. Fox, in reply to Burke's invectives against Paine, said, "He had before term-

ed Mr. Paine's book a libel on the constitution of Great Britain, he would now observe, that he thought Mr. Burke's book to be a libel on every free constitution in the world."

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forest, and was so violent and abusive that the secretary of state was compelled to rise to answer the lord chancellor. Pitt immediately offered the king a choice between the chancellor's dismissal or his own retirement; and Thurlow, who had found that Pitt had withdrawn all confidence from him, and who probably relied on the favour of the king, was dismissed.

A proposition was now made to the Whigs to join the cabinet; but, since it was evident that the Tories were to retain the majority, and Pitt the supremacy, Fox refused to treat.

A notice given by Mr. Grey, that he would, in the next session, bring forward a motion in favour of parliamentary reform, had occasioned some conversation, in the house of commons, upon the subject of political clubs—institutions which existed to an extent before unknown in England, and exercised an influence unprecedented in our history. In these assemblies the demagogues without and the ultra-Whigs within the house met, and arranged all the details of popular agitation. In 1780 "The Society for Constitutional Information" was founded by Major Cartwright and Mr. Grey, and proposed, as its object, the diffusion of such works as should afford political information to the multitude, and arouse them to the pursuit of parliamentary reform. "The Quintuple Alliance," founded in 1782, was composed

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of men who all sought for annual parliaments and universal suffrage. This society numbered the Duke of Richmond (or citizen Richmond, as he then took pleasure in being called), among its members. Many others sprang into being, or increased into importance, at the breaking out of the French revolution. These associations were superseded in popular favour by "The Society for Free Debate," which was established in 1791, and which met in Coachmakers' Hall, for the discussion of political and polemical questions. At this debating club the most violent democratic doctrines were debated and approved of; and speakers might be nightly heard eulogizing the most frantic of the French revolutionists, and advocating the execution of the French king. A general passion for oratorical display appeared to have taken possession of the lower classes; the debaters in Coachmakers' Hall found imitators in every corner of the metropolis, and the rooms in which they met were always crowded by a propitious audience. Both speakers and hearers being commonly persons without property in the country, or influence beyond their own society, naturally looked with longing towards the state of France, where the ringleaders of the mob were the ministers of the state. The influence of these discussions was seen in the importance suddenly acquired by the "Corresponding Society," which was originally an obscure club, composed of a

few mechanics and inferior tradesmen, set on foot by Hardy, in 1792, and professing, as its object, the attainment of equality, and the vindication of the rights of man. These revolutionary principles soon obtained for the Corresponding Society an immense accession of numbers and influence; it ramified throughout the kingdom, and, in a little time, there was not a populous town in England which had not a club in active correspondence with the parent society. This society dispersed, in every hamlet, the writings of Paine, levied contributions for mutual defence, corresponded with the national assembly of France, and ostentatiously published their proceedings. The leaders avowed, as their practical object, nothing further than annual parliaments and universal suffrage; but they were tampering with a power they could not govern. The wishes of the major part of their followers tended to anarchy and pillage; and the cry for annual parliaments and universal suffrage soon became a demand for a national convention to reform the constitution.*

This was a mere movement of the lower classes which required to be watched, but was by no means necessary to be feared. The few educated men whom ambition, enthusiasm, or vanity had placed among

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* See the State Trials of 1793-4. us from ruin;" and indeed all the Gerald's tract, called "A Con- democratic writings of the time. vention the only means of Saving

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them, were remarkable exceptions to the general ignorance, and were, in very few instances, exempt from the general poverty.* The middle classes of England, the repository of the real power of the state, abhorred alike the clubbists and their doctrines. The disgusting cant of republicanism which appeared in the writings and conversation of the democrats, led moderate men to confound this nauseous affectation with the genuine language of liberty, and to shun them both. All desire for parliamentary reform ceased among the

* Even Burke, who was so anxious to magnify the terrors of revolution, and to draw from the excesses of English democrats an excuse for his own defection, sometimes betrayed his own contempt for the power of these clubs. Upon one occasion he calls them low intriguers and contemptible clubbists. In the opening of his "Reflections," he speaks of the "Society for Constitutional Information" as a society whose proceedings have never been accounted, except by some of its members, as of any serious consequence—a poor charitable club; and of the "Revolution Society," as a club of dissenters, who, until they were noticed by the French national assembly, had never occupied a moment of his thoughts, nor, he

believed, of any person's out of their own set.

To the same purpose I may quote a very celebrated passage from the same work. "The vanity, restlessness, petulance, and spirit of intrigue of several petty cabals, who attempt to hide their total want of confidence in bustle and noise, and puffing and mutual quotation of each other, makes you imagine that our contemptuous neglect of their abilities is a general mark of acquiescence in their opinions. No such thing I assure you. Because half-a-dozen grasshoppers, under a fern, make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle repose beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent—pray do

middle classes ; Toryism never was so strong ; Whiggism, nay democracy, never was so weak as while Thelwall was haranguing from his tribune, Gerald declaiming among the friends of free debate, and Condorcet congratulating the Corresponding Society, that the throne of George III., founded in sophistry and error, was nearly sapped through by republican truths.

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The Whigs strove in vain against the current. Finding that their usual supporters among the people were either rabid with republicanism or frightened into Toryism, they attempted to concentrate their remaining strength. For this purpose they established a club, under the title of "The Friends of the People," to which Mr. Grey, first of the influential Whigs, gave in his adherence ; but which Fox, and some others of the party rather reluctantly countenanced. Amid the gusts of Toryism and democracy which swept around her, it was not easy to keep the Whig vessel precisely straight in her course. The Society of the Friends of the people was the scene of many discussions, nor did it survive through its first year without several secessions.

not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field ; that, of course, they are many in number ; or that, after all, they are other than the little, shrivelled, meager, hopping,

though loud and troublesome insects of the hour.

"I almost venture to affirm, that not one in a hundred amongst us participates in the 'triumph' of the Revolution Society."

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The commencement of the session of 1793-4 occurred while the country was excited by the expectation of war with France. The parties have been remarkably consistent in their policy towards that country. While she retained her old government, the Whigs, from Russell to Chatham, waged war to the knife against her, as the plague-spot of despotism which threatened infection to Europe; but no sooner did she become a republic than their enmity ceased, and now the fury of the Tories broke forth. The speech from the throne gave a presage of war, which was responded to with delight throughout the nation, but which was heard with rage by the democrats, and sorrow by the Whigs. These last saw that the country was falling into the temper which it was the minister's interest to excite; that Burke's contortions of horror had produced some effect, and that the property classes, always so easily terrified, were eager, at any sacrifice, to kindle a fire between themselves and the object of their fear. Burke, upon this occasion, put himself in the van of the ministerial array. When Fox moved an amendment to the address, importing that an ambassador should be sent to Paris, he appeared, for the first time, upon the treasury bench. He looked upon sending an ambassador to Paris, as a suing for peace. "Yield to traitors to their king? to a nation of murderers? Stain the illustrious pages of history with such profanation and impiety? May God, in

his infinite mercy, add vigour to our arm, and enable us to check the encroachments of those monsters of society!" Thus did Burke conclude a speech, which Mr. Courtenay who, after Sheridan, was the most caustic of the Whig speakers, correctly analyzed as consisting of three proportions; first, that we were at war with France; secondly, that to send an ambassador to that country would be suing for peace; and thirdly, that we ought to make war in order to exterminate the French metaphysicians. Windham and several other members who called themselves Whigs, but who had lately, with many expressions of regret, voted upon all important occasions with the Tories, inclined to the popular side. The speech of Fox was desponding and apologetic. He would not even venture upon a division.*

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Recent circumstances had shown that the democratic clubbists had not all the elements of disturbance upon their side. The Tories were not behind their opponents in assembling in dinner-parties and clubs. Riots had occurred at Birmingham, at Cambridge, at Manchester, and at other places. Church and king mobs had insulted the dissenters, attacked their houses, and destroyed their property. Stripped of their popularity the Whig party was become again a mere nucleus, num-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxx.

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bering scarce sixty members in the house of commons. The arrival of the news of the murder of the French king quickened the zeal of the Tories, caused some dissension of opinion even among the democrats, and utterly abashed the Whigs. When the king declared in effect that the war in which we had plunged, was a war of opinions, that it was “to oppose an effectual barrier to a system which struck at the security and peace of all independent nations”—in other words, to a system of government without a king, Fox and Sheridan protested; but Burke sneered at the smallness of their numbers, and they could not venture to show their poverty by a division. In the lords, Earl Stanhope appeared as frantic a democrat as any in Paris. He loudly condemned the war, and refrained from all public disapproval of the execution of the king. He was the sole representative of his party in that assembly. The Whigs were not much more numerous. Loughborough had left his party, and vaulted at once into the chancellor’s seat, and the Duke of Portland and many of his friends were only waiting an opportunity to follow his example. Lansdowne, Lauderdale, Derby, and Stanhope are the only names frequently found as speakers in opposition to the war.

Before England was irrevocably committed in a league with the kings of Europe to force the Bourbons back upon France, the Whigs determined to

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enter a solemn protest against the projected crusade. On the 18th of February Fox brought forward five resolutions, declaring that it was not for the honour or interest of England to go to war with France, to suppress or punish any opinions or principles, however pernicious in their tendency, or for the purpose of establishing in France any particular form of government. That the complaints made against France were not of a nature to justify hostilities in the first instance. That negotiation had not been sufficiently tried; and that it was the duty of ministers to take care that this country was involved in no engagements which might prevent her from making a separate peace, or compel her to continue the war for the unjustifiable purpose of compelling the people of France to submit to a form of government not approved by that nation.

Fox enlarged upon the topics which these resolutions introduced. Looking towards Burke, he said that ministers had suffered themselves to be imposed upon and misled, by those who wished to go to war with France, on account of her internal government; that while disavowing such a motive in debate, they evidenced it by their conduct; that their negotiations had been illusory, calculated only for the public eye, while all their private endeavours had been to render them abortive and to foment the quarrel. He pointed to Poland, lately seized upon

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by the despots of Russia, Austria, and Prussia.

England, during this egregious act of rapine, stood

by unmoved; for it was done by kings, it was only

against the minor irregularities of an infant republic

that she felt called upon to brandish her thunders.

He deprecated very strongly any thing so infamous

as our being supposed to be a party to the abominable

confederacy of kings now forming against France.

If we had quarrels, let us fight them by ourselves, or

if we were to have allies, let us keep our cause of

quarrel completely separate from theirs. Let us

never meddle with the internal concerns of the

French republic, nor burden ourselves with stipula-

tions which should prevent us from making a sepa-

rate peace, without the concurrence or approbation

of those sovereigns."

Pitt left his defence entirely to Burke, who poured

forth one of his usual shining and lava-like torrents

of abuse upon the conductors of the French govern-

ment. In Burke's speeches at this period, we see

none of that compass of mind which he was wont to

exhibit; he appears in the debates as a man of one

idea, as an enthusiast unable to withdraw his mind

for one moment from the favourite object of its con-

templation. In reading some of these speeches, we

may occasionally suppose for a moment that we have

lighted upon some of the intemperate trash of Mr.

Drake, or a similar orator,* until some passage of overbearing eloquence, some image of exquisite beauty, arrests the attention, and forces us to admit with regret that the speaker could only be Burke.

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The debate called up Grey, who vindicated the arguments of his friend from the misrepresentations of Burke, Adam (who was an egregious example of the efficacy of the coalition, in converting the Tory followers of Lord North into Whigs), Jekyll, Maitland, Lambton, and, lastly, Sheridan; all of whom directed their attacks against either Burke or Windham, as their most powerful opponents. The latter, as Sheridan remarked, treated his friends with a sort of French fraternity, and did them more real injury than their open enemies. Of the avowed Tories, Jenkinson was the only man having any pretension to talent who came forward in the debate. Pitt and Dundas were silent.

Upon the division, the numbers were 44 to 270.†

* What, for instance, could be in worse taste than his theatrical exhibition of the dagger, in the debate upon the Alien bill. It is said by an eyewitness, that the house estimated this stage trick at its proper value, and felt more inclined to laugh than to shudder.

† The names of the minority upon this occasion have been pre-

served, and the list is worthy of insertion, as an illustration of the condition of the Whig party in the commons.

Antonie, W. Lee.

Bouverie, Hon. E.

Burch, J. R.

Baker, William.

Courtenay, J.

Coke, T. W.

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It was in circumstances so adverse as these, that Mr. Grey undertook to resuscitate in the house of commons the question of Parliamentary Reform. He

Coke, E.
Church, J. B.
Colhoun, W.
Crespigny, J. C.
Erskine, T.
Fox, C. J.
Fitzpatrick, R.
Francis, P.
Grey, Charles.
Hare, James.
Howard, Henry.
Hussey, W.
Harrison, J.
Howel, D.
Jekyll, Joseph.
Maitland, T.
Macleod, Col.
North, Dudley.
Plumer, W.
Powlett, W. Powlett.
Russell, Lord John.
Russell, Lord William.
Sheridan, R. B.
St. John, St. Andrew.
Smith, William.
Spencer, Lord R.
Sturt, Charles.
Taylor, M. A.
Taylor, C.
Thompson, T.
Vaughan, B.

Wycombe, Earl of.
Wyndham, P. C.
Whitbread, S.
Wilbraham, R.
Western, C. C.
Whitmore, T.
Wennington, Sir E.

Tellers.

Adam, W.
Lambton, W. H.

Many Whigs, however, who were favourable to Fox's resolutions were accidentally absent. Upon comparing the lists of the minorities, it is found that no less than 21 members who voted with Fox in the minority of 50 upon the address were absent upon this occasion; the names of these members are :

Aubrey, Sir John.
Bentinck, Lord Edward.
Bingham, Richard.
Byng, George.
Cavendish, Lord G. A. H.
Damer, H.
Edwards, J. N.
Fletcher, Sir Henry.
Grenville, Thomas.
Harecount, John.
Jervis, Sir John.

was appointed to this post of honour by the society of the friends of the people, and the prayer of the petition upon which he founded his motion may be looked upon as a declaration upon which the general body of the Whigs were agreed. This prayer ran thus :

“ That your honourable house will be pleased to take such measures as to your wisdom may seem meet, to remove the evils arising from the unequal manner in which the different parts of the kingdom are admitted to participate in the representation. To correct the partial distribution of the elective franchise, which commits the choice of representatives to select bodies of men of such limited numbers as renders them an easy prey to the artful, or a ready purchase to the wealthy.

“ To regulate the right of voting upon an uniform and equitable principle.

“ And, finally, to shorten the duration of parliaments, and by removing the causes of that confusion, litigation, and expense, with which they are at this day conducted. To render frequent and new elections what our ancestors at the revolution asserted them to be, the means of a happy union and good agreement between the king and the people.”

Mr. Grey declined to bring forward any specific plan of reform, and moved only for the appointment of a committee. A debate of two days' duration ensued; a debate interesting chiefly from the for-

Lee, Anthony.
Milton, Viscount.
Martin, James.
Milnes, R. S.

Stuart, John Shaw.
Tarleton, B.
Wharton, John.
Whitmore, Thomas.

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titude with which a mere handful of Whigs bore up against the overwhelming majority of Tories, and the eloquence with which Fox, Sheridan, Grey, Courtenay, and Whitbread bore back all the eloquence of their apostate opponents. But what cared Pitt for charges of apostacy, while he could look around upon the numbers who cheered him in his avowal, and eulogised his infamy—while Burke sat by his side, and Yonge, with a long train of inferior deserters, felt that his cause was their own. No one who reads this debate, without turning to the division, could imagine that the eloquence which convinces him proceeded from a party consisting only of 43 members, while that which was employed in the defence of corruption, came from a majority of 284, nearly the whole of this being contributed by apostate Whigs.* The cause of Whiggism was now desperate indeed.

Pitt, however, was still unsatisfied. Having given himself to the kings of Europe, he thought that nothing had been accomplished, while a voice could be raised against his efforts to work their will. The king, the parliament, the frightened people were with him: the democrats were contemptible from their fewness and their impotence, the Whigs were annihilated. Yet while the grasshoppers were

* See this debate in the Parl. Hist., vol. xxx.

still suffered to chirp beneath the fern, he could not think himself secure. The year 1794 gave him all he wished, placed the constitution in abeyance, and the liberties of his countrymen at his feet. With a decision always necessary to successful tyranny, he ~~seized the leaders of the democratic clubs~~, closed ~~the debating societies~~ in which foolish mechanics harmlessly vapoured about equality, made spoil of all their papers, and having cautiously collected all the rubbish of resolutions and correspondence, placed it with a ludicrous simulation of horror and alarm upon the tables of the houses of parliament. A secret committee of twenty-one of his trusty adherents examined the mass, and although nearly the whole of it had been many months before printed in all the newspapers in the kingdom, they did not fail to discover in it much reason for consternation and proof of projected rebellion. Scotland, where the law was more tractable than in England, was the scene of the first prosecutions; the paid spies of the minister proved the treasonable projects they had themselves suggested, and they alone had approved, and although one of them was caught in the meshes of his own net, and abandoned by his masters,* others

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* See the correspondence between Robert Watt and Mr. Dundas.—*State Trials*, vol. xxiii., col. 1322. And also the evidence of the lord advocate, by which it appeared that Watt had failed in some of his attempts to sell his information.

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were not wanting to succeed to the task. Gerrald died in a transport ship, ruined in fortune, and heart-broken by long confinement with common felons; commending with his last breath, his infant daughter to the protection of the friends of freedom; others, as guiltless as he, were exiled from their country, and expiated their crime of advocating the reform that Pitt once deemed so necessary, under the taskmasters of a penal colony—but the required sensation was created, the Habeas Corpus act was suspended, the gaols were filled with political delinquents, and no man who professed himself a reformer could say, that the morrow might not see him a prisoner upon a charge of high treason.

What could the slender minority of Whigs do against a power now grown so terrible. They debated, they reasoned, they threatened, they attempted all that their puny strength could justify, but they were bent like twigs before the blast; thirteen times they divided the house against the Suspension bill, but the utmost number to which they could raise their minority was 39, and even this decreased as their opposition continued. But the rush towards despotism against which the Whigs could not stand, was arrested by the people. Although the Habeas Corpus had fallen, the Trial by Jury remained, and now, as it had done before, when the alarm of fictitious plots had disposed the nation

to acquiesce in the surrender of its liberties, it opposed a barrier which Toryism could not pass. When the minister attempted to prosecute his political opponents to the death, it became necessary to adduce evidence before an audience less tractable than a house of commons, composed of the deputies of men whom he had bribed with a peerage. Hardy was the first selected for destruction. For nine hours did Sir John Scott labour in an opening speech to substantiate some charge of treason, evincing by the nature of his exertions the poverty of his case. Then came the proofs; sufficient proof of a design to levy war against the king was sworn to by men who avowed themselves as government spies, but their testimony received no corroboration. Of all the witnesses called by the attorney-general, upon a trial which lasted through eight days, not one who possessed a credible character could depose to a single important fact against the prisoner. All their answers, upon cross examination, tended to prove that although the prisoner's political views were visionary, yet his means of propounding them had been perfectly legal. The jury acquitted him.

Horne Tooke came next. Horne Tooke, the early friend of Pitt—with whom he had sat at the Thatched House, and drawn up his own propositions of reform.—*He* had been seized upon in his old age, and was

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now brought forth from a damp dungeon to contend for his life. But there was less proof against him than there had even been against Hardy. He also was acquitted. After two such checks the multitude supposed that the ministers would have desisted from the chase; and when they heard that several indictments had been abandoned, they thought the prosecutions were at an end; but Scott still clung to the hope that his spies might be believed. He had obtained a knowledge of Thelwall's line of defence;* he had learned from this which of his own witnesses could be discredited, and he hoped, with this chart, to avoid the rocks upon which he had formerly split. The grounds of accusation were much the same as those alleged against Hardy and Tooke, with the addition only of certain violent expressions which were sworn to by two reporters, as the ministerial spies were now delicately termed, but disbelieved by the jury. Thelwall also was acquitted.

These trials caused many men to pause. Some even of the active supporters of the minister could not look without alarm at the dreadful jeopardy in which these men had stood: accused by a power which could command every facility for collecting evidence, all the legal skill necessary for its arrangement, all the eloquence by which it could be enforced; which moreover produced, by its accusation, a pre-

* Life of Thelwall, vol. i., p. 247.

judice of the prisoner's guilt, and appeared almost omnipotent when arrayed against him; it appeared scarcely possible that any man who had ever interfered in politics could escape. Many men asked themselves whether an Englishman should be put through such an ordeal, upon the uncorroborated report of a hired spy, or the occurrence of a ministerial suspicion.—The public joy was very general at these acquittals.*

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During the campaign against the parliamentary reformers, the Whig party suffered a still further diminution—a diminution, however, which was rather nominal than real. That section of the Whig party which, headed by the Duke of Portland in the lords, and Windham in the commons, had been, for some time, withdrawing themselves from their party, at length, urged forward by Burke, passed the rubicon, and took office under the present Tory minister. In July, 1794, the duke received a blue ribbon and the office of the third secretary of state, with the management of Ireland—the very office which Burke, as an economical reformer, had succeeded for a time in abolishing. Earl Fitzwilliam became president of the council, and afterwards lord lieutenant of Ireland.

* For these trials and the facts connected with them I have used "The State Trials," vols. xxii. to xxvi.—"The Life of Major Cartwright," by his niece—and especially the "Life of Thelwall." There is no full-length report of the trial of Thelwall.

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Earl Spencer was lord privy seal, and, by an after-arrangement, first lord of the admiralty. Windham was secretary at war.

Our prescribed limits must be indefinitely enlarged were we to yield to the temptation so often presented, of resting upon every brilliant passage of arms in the house of commons. The recent desertions were, of course, followed by many bitter accusations from the remaining Whigs, and defended by many declarations of disinterestedness from the deserters themselves. Sheridan attacked the seceders with merciless severity. The debates throughout the session were replete with personal acrimony; and Pitt was not always perfectly successful in his defence of the recent converts.

It has been sometimes asserted that Fox was, at this time, the deserter; and that the Duke of Portland, who was the acknowledged head of the party, had a right to lead the Whigs to a coalition with Pitt. The Duke of Portland had certainly been looked upon as the nominal chief of the Whigs. As an individual of the highest rank he had been put forward by a party never insensible to the claims of rank, as their prime minister; but of all those who thus readily yielded to the duke precedence in office,

* It was upon this occasion that Erskine achieved his highest triumphs, and rendered his best service to Whiggism and the Whigs.

there was not one who thought that he was the man to declare the sentiments or guide the conduct of the party. The Duke of Portland is indeed far more deeply involved than either Burke or Windham in the charge of desertion. In 1793, long after Fox had opened his views upon the French revolution, and Burke had seceded, Fox published his letter to the electors of Westminster, explaining and justifying his views. To this manifesto, which was chiefly directed against Burke, the Whig club responded by a resolution, "That their confidence in Mr. Fox was confirmed, strengthened, and increased, by the calumnies against him." In this resolution the Duke of Portland and Lord Fitzwilliam concurred,* while others who dissented from the vote seceded from the club. These noblemen, therefore, not only abandoned their party, but renounced their former opinions. To contend that Fox was bound to follow them in this renunciation is an evident absurdity.

In their subsequent conduct, the Whigs who now seceded, manifested all the ardour of apostacy, and soon discovered a proficiency in the doctrines of Toryism which left Pitt far behind. If attempts to destroy political opponents, by means of constructive treasons, failed, it was Windham who stood forth to brand the intended victims with the name of

* Burke's Observations on the Conduct of the Minority.

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“Acquitted Felons,” and who joined Dundas in sighing for the more efficacious procedure of the Scotch courts. If the war with France was denounced, it was Windham who threw off all disguise, and boldly stated the real object of the war. “With a government so feeble, so precarious, so insecure, we can have no stability.”* It was Windham and his friends who emboldened Pitt to declare that “he would not acknowledge such a government even to treat with it.” If a dependant of the minister, and the organizer of Tory clubs, put forth a doctrine that the government of England is a monarchy of the ancient stock, which may go on in all its functions without lords or commons, it is Windham, the secretary at war, who steps forward to assert, that “possibly it was wrong, but as far as he could judge, the sentiment was innocent.”† It was Windham, the seceding Whig, who stood forth to defend the exhumed absurdities of the Stuart Tories, and attempted to do openly, what Pitt, more modest, was contented to accomplish by a display of tactics—to retain the author in the service of the government.

* *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxii., col. 15. conduct of this gentleman deprived him of a peerage.
 But the minority against the war increased to 86, and even Mr. Banks, who never voted against Pitt but with extreme reluctance, was in the minority. The upright

† See the Debate upon Reeve’s Libel on the British Constitution, *Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxii., col. 612.

Notwithstanding this accession of violent partisans, the war lost its popularity; bread grew scarce; commerce was crippled; the young republic put forth resources that Burke* never dreamt she had possessed, and the easy success that had been anticipated, was replaced by reverses.† The people clamoured and threw stones at the king, and Pitt eagerly took advantage of their violence to tear

* It is very much the fashion to extol the prescience of Burke in that he foretold that great violence and bloodshed would follow the revolution. But it is not sufficient for a prophet who deals largely in predictions to be occasionally right, and we cannot forget that Burke spoke of the glory and the power of France as gone, and intimated that the next generation would listen with astonishment to the tradition that Frenchmen had once been formidable enemies.

† An extract from the address of the Corresponding Society recapitulates the results of Tory government in the year 1795.—“The national debt which even at the commencement of the present reign amounted only to eighty-

eight millions and a half, has already swelled to the enormous sum of three hundred and ten millions; the annual burden of taxes, customs and excise, which, at the same period, was no more than seven millions, cannot be computed at less than twenty millions; while the poor-rates, which, during the space of two hundred years to the middle of the present century, had been found to increase only in a regular progression of between four or five thousand a year, have been swelled during the former part of the present reign by an annual increase of between twenty and thirty thousand, and, during the latter part, of between fifty and sixty thousand pounds.

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away the few shreds of the constitution which yet covered them. He brought forward the Seditious Meetings bill, and the Treasonable Practices bill. Bills which, among other provisions, placed the conduct of every political meeting under the protection of a magistrate, and rendered disobedience to his command *a felony*. These outrageous propositions produced meetings and petitions throughout the country, and the most stormy debates of the session in parliament. Finding the ministerial majority compact and unscrupulous, Fox declared, that if those bills passed, and were enforced, “the propriety of resistance, instead of remaining any longer a question of morality, would become merely a question of prudence.”* Sheridan advised the nation “to acquiesce in these bills only as long as resistance was imprudent.”† Grey asserted that “the people should only be induced to refrain from resistance from motives of prudence.”‡ And Whitbread assented implicitly to the opinion of Fox.¶ Some of these Whig leaders explained away this bold declaration, and spoke of the resistance they contemplated as a passive resistance—the resistance of the anvil to the hammer; but Fox repeated his expression, and justified it in one of the most argu-

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxii., col. 385.

‡ Ibid., 387.

† Ibid., 386.

¶ Ibid., 393.

mentative and constitutional speeches, which even he has bequeathed to posterity.*

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In the house of lords the sentiments of the majority was well expressed by Dr. Samuel Horsley, one of Pitt's bishops. This prelate admitted, that if any man should be twice guilty of the crime of publishing a work upon the representation, which should suggest the general conclusion that the government was corrupt, he would be under one of these bills liable to transportation. But he could see no injustice in the enactment, "he, in fact, *did not know what the mass of the people in any country had to do with the laws but to obey them.*" The minority in the lords against the third reading amounted to 5, which was increased by proxies to 7.

In the debates in the commons we now miss the presence of Burke. In June, 1794, that great man had retired from the house, and awaited his promised peerage. This honour before so coveted, was, however, soon afterwards rendered valueless by the death of his son, and consequently declined. The death of this young man, whom Burke considered to have inherited all his genius, and whom he hoped to place in a far happier position for its development than he himself had enjoyed, destroyed his most cherished hope, and left his life without an object. Upon

* In the debate on the third col. 422. The largest minorities reading.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxii., against these bills were 43 and 45.

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retiring into private life, he found his affairs by no means prosperous. A pension of 3700*l.* which he now received, was necessary to his comfort, but it was loudly condemned in parliament. This pension has been compared with that of Chatham.* Burke was a great man, a man to whom much inconsistency and error may be pardoned. Let us not dwell upon his faults. But such comparisons are injudicious,—they should never be made.

On the 8th of July, 1797, Burke died, leaving a void among our public characters which has never since been filled up. In those days there were giants on the earth; Burke was the first of these to fall, and those who alone seemed worthy to contend with him have since followed. The rising generation looks on the remains of these mighty minds as upon the bones of the mammoth, and turns in vain in quest of evidence that the race is not extinct.

While even that portion of the constitution which protected personal liberty was suspended, it was to little purpose to attempt to repair older breaches. The question of Parliamentary Reform was suffered to lie dormant until the session of 1797. It was then again brought forward by Mr. Grey, who proposed a specific plan, having as its scope, to increase the county representation, and the number of the county constituency; to divide the borough repre-

* Prior's Life of Burke.

sentation more equally throughout the kingdom ; to extend the suffrage to all householders ; and to render parliaments triennial.

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The arguments advanced in the debate offer nothing especially worthy of notice ; they were generally on the side of the Whigs, such as Pitt had himself advanced when he was a reformer, with the addition of instances of extravagance, jobbing, and oppression, derived from the acts of his administration ; on the side of the Tories, they were such as Lord North had used against Pitt, with the addition also of topics derived from the democratic spirit prevalent in the nation. On the division the numbers were, 256 to 91, showing some increase in the numbers of reformers, or at least some increase of interest in the question.*

Among the members on both sides of the house, who divided upon this question, there were several who require some introductory notice ; there was one who was *almost* worthy to fill the seat vacated by Burke. George Canning had entered the house of commons in 1793, and had now taken his natural station in the house.

George Canning was the only son of a barrister of good family but slender means, who having offended

* Parl. Hist., vol. xxxiii., col. 734. The mutiny at the Nore occasioned some parliamentary proceedings during this session, but Whigs and Tories were alike unanimous in forwarding the measures requisite at this dangerous crisis.

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his family by marrying a portionless wife, was discarded with a pittance of 150*l.* a year. A speculating disposition and improvident habits, quickly dissipated this annuity; the first birthday of George Canning witnessed the death of his father, who died in penury and misery of a broken heart. The widow and her infant were left in a state of utter destitution, and the former was obliged for her maintenance to attempt the stage. She appeared as Jane Shore, but failing to satisfy a London audience, she was compelled to accept provincial engagements, and, at length, married a person of the same profession. In youth she was beautiful and accomplished. In after life little more is known of her than that she received, to the last hour of her existence, the most assiduous and affectionate attentions of her illustrious son.*

* Mrs. Hunn, for that was the name she acquired by her second marriage, soon became a second time a widow, and settled at Bath. Her son took the earliest opportunity of withdrawing her from the stage; he applied to her support a considerable portion of the means allowed him by his family for his college expenses, and when he came forth to the world, his mother shared every success. At his retirement from the office of under secretary, in 1801, he settled upon her the pension of

500*l.* a year, to which he was entitled: he paid an annual visit to her at Bath, and made it a rule with which no engagements were allowed to interfere, to write to her every Sunday. Even during his embassy to Lisbon, when there was usually an interval of several weeks between the mails, the Sunday letter was never omitted, and the packet frequently brought four or five together. These letters the delighted parent read with no little pride in the circle of her friends at Bath.

The education of the infant was undertaken by the father's family, and George was placed at Eton by the liberality of his uncle, and it is said, at the recommendation of Fox. Here his surprising powers were quickly developed : at the age of sixteen he was not only one of the senior scholars, but the scholar to whom no other boy in the school thought it shame to yield precedence. When, in 1786, the Eton boys determined to put forth a periodical, the general feeling voted George Canning for its editor. Nor was that homage unworthily paid : a remarkable purity of style and happiness of expression soon distinguished those essays in the " Microcosm " which were signed " B.," and rescued that periodical from the ordinary fate of the puerilities which issue in ~~vagrant~~ numbers from our public schools.*

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In his eighteenth year, Canning left Eton for Christ Church, Oxford, where he fully sustained the reputation that had preceded him from Eton. He carried off several of the university prizes, any one of which will build a little reputation, and what was of more importance, he cultivated the friendship of the most able among his contemporaries. Among these was young Jenkinson, the son of the Earl of Liverpool. The intimacy between these two young men became strict. The son of the nobleman could ap-

* And sometimes from our universities.

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preciate the genius of the commoner, who in return discerned the talent, and bowed to the rank of his friend. In politics, however, they were altogether opposed. Jenkinson adhering to the Toryism in which he had been educated, and Canning espousing with enthusiasm the cause of the Whigs. Jenkinson preceded Canning in their entrance into public life, and made his first essay with so much applause in the house of commons, that Sheridan could not forbear telling the house that great as were the talents of the young speaker they had just heard, they were about to be eclipsed by those of his friend who would shortly appear upon their side of the house.

From Oxford Canning became a student of Lincoln's Inn, but he appears to have applied himself more diligently to the practice of oratory in the different debating societies in the metropolis than to the study of the law. At that time, the leaders of the parties attentively watched the universities, and lost no opportunity of enlisting talent in their ranks. Canning had been known to Sheridan as a schoolboy; when he left the university, he was introduced by his uncle to Fox, Burke, Fitzpatrick, and other leading Whigs. What were the immediate intentions of that party with regard to a man of whom every one who knew him had already conceived such hopes does not appear; but while they were, perhaps, deliberating, Jenkinson was gently leading his friend

beyond their influence and discovering to him the honours and emoluments of office. The period was favourable for the revisal of opinions; the Whigs were abandoning Fox in flights, and clattering round his rival. Under the mighty shadow of Burke's apostacy, a thousand ordinary deserters might lurk undiscovered. An opportune message from Pitt, desiring an interview, decided the question; Mr. Canning had an explanation with Sheridan,* concurred in the policy which government was pursuing, and took his seat for Newport.

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* It has been said that Sheridan, with more individual friendship than public honesty, undertook to convince the young aspirant that Whiggism was productive of nothing but empty fame and vulgar admiration; and that a poor man, if he would enter the house of commons without ruining himself, must become a Tory and support the minister. Another story told upon the same subject is, that at one of Mrs. Crewe's suppers, where all the Whigs and wits in town were accustomed to assemble, Canning having contrived to draw Sheridan aside into private conversation, formally consulted him on the expediency of giving up an

unprofitable set of principles for others more marketable, in other words, of going over to the minister; and that Sheridan, after he had listened to the communication with all due gravity, instead of replying to the private ear of the querist, broke forth in a loud and humorous appeal to the lady hostess, demanding her judgment on a point of so much consequence to the character and consistency of the scrupulous and conscientious young gentleman who requested his advice. Neither of these anecdotes appear, however, to rest upon any adequate authority.

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Throughout his first session Canning's attention was active and his attendance constant, but he never spoke ; he was employing himself in the acquisition of a thorough knowledge of the forms of the house ; and no opportunity, and many offered themselves, could induce him to break his resolution. In January, 1794, he made his maiden essay in reply to Fox, upon the subject of the King of Sardinia's subsidy, and elicited applause which sustained but did not increase his reputation. His oratory, however, improved as his confidence became established, and he soon became the greatest master of the declamatory style of eloquence that modern times had heard. He was a most able and entertaining speaker, with much acuteness and even subtlety ; with admirable ingenuity, and powers of fancy perhaps never surpassed, clothing his images in rich and even gaudy diction, and casting all his language in sentences exquisitely polished. With such powers Canning was able to become an orator of the highest order : but this he was not. An orator who remembers himself while he is speaking can never persuade his audience to think only of his subject ; there was, in Canning's oratory, a striving after point, a sacrifice of argument to effect a hurrying over the business parts of the speech, to dwell upon passages of brilliancy, all of which tended greatly to increase the admiration of the audience, but did not contribute to their conviction. This was

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a splendid specimen of the Asian style of eloquence, rich in ornament, delicate in tissue, and elaborately finished, but frequently containing very little substance. No speaker could excel Canning in the address with which he shaped his own case, and the unscrupulous dexterity with which he exhibited and contrasted the propositions to which he was opposed. This declamatory style is little adapted for defence, and Canning, therefore, was most brilliant when delivering a show speech in the house of commons, a speech to dazzle the cross benches, and afterwards, when distributed through the country, to allure the many to admire his eloquence and *believe his facts*. When the rough Whigs attempted to demolish his airy fabrics, he had a ready and copious tide of wit to pour around them, and abundantly stinging sarcasm to launch against their assailants.

The character of Canning's oratory was, probably, the produce of his situation, not of his taste. All his early sympathies had been given to the cause of liberty. All his boyhood's efforts had been made upon that side. After-events discovered that these early impressions were never entirely effaced. When he found himself standing in the house of commons, defending, or at any rate engaged to defend, any measure upon which a Tory cabinet might resolve, can we wonder that he avoided the strict lines of argument, that he cultivated a skill for weaving

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beautiful meshes, or that his eloquence appeared to proceed only from his head when he could not venture to trust his heart.

I believe that, whatever may have been Canning's opinions of the isolated acts which he advocated, he had no love for the general principles whence they sprung. Canning was the second Bolingbroke of Toryism ; he was a Tory from position, but his fundamental convictions were those of a Whig. Of all his party his eyes alone were opened to see the power of the newly-evoked spirit of public opinion. To him alone was it given to see that resistance to this adversary was vain. He saw as Bolingbroke had seen before, that the post which Toryism then held was untenable ; and he dragged rather than led her to a stronger point, a few paces in advance. But this appeared afterwards, when he had a voice in the deliberations upon the measures he defended—now he implicitly followed the minister.*

As some counterpoise to the advantage gained by the Tories in the accession of Jenkinson and Canning, we may mention the acquisition of Tierney by the Whigs. George Tierney was born at Gibraltar, in 1761, where his father was then resident as prize agent, and whence he afterwards retired to Paris

* Life of Canning, by Dr. John Edinburgh Review, vols. xxviii. Styles. Memoir by R. Therry, and xxxvii., &c.
Esq. Moore's Life of Sheridan.

with a handsome fortune. George was educated at Eton, and at Peterhouse, Cambridge, where, in 1784, he graduated in laws, and whence he repaired to London, in order to apply himself to the study of the law. Tierney adds another to the continual instances of men who have deserted the bar for the senate. The death of three brothers afforded him the means of gratifying his inclination towards politics. In 1788 he contested Colchester, a borough renowned for the ruinous nature of its contests, and an election committee reported that he was duly elected. In 1790, however, the case was reversed; his opponent was returned, and Tierney's petition was voted frivolous and vexatious. It was said that the Duke of Portland had engaged to defray the expense of this severe contest; but the arrangement being delayed until the duke had changed his party, he chose to forget his promise; and when Tierney's agent attempted to refresh his memory by means of a bill in chancery, the chancellor stayed the proceedings upon the ground of public policy. A sacrifice of twelve thousand pounds was of some importance to a man who did not look forward to retrieve his losses from the public purse. Tierney now confined himself to pamphlet writing until the general election of 1796, when he was invited to stand for Southwark. He was beaten upon the poll, but ousted his antagonist by a petition, and was at length fairly seated in the

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house of commons by the operation of the treating act.

In private life Tierney is described, by one of his noble friends, as delighting his associates by his ever ready and playful wit, and endearing himself by the purity of his mind and the kindness and benevolence of his heart.* In party he was a Whig of the Fox school, equally removed from Toryism on the one hand or levelling democracy on the other. In the house of commons he was the shrewd and sagacious man of the world. As a speaker he was exceedingly original, and singularly unostentatious. His speeches were more like colloquial good sense spoken in a parlour than lofty or studied eloquence uttered in the senate. His argument was generally sound ; but his real power consisted in the cutting sarcasms which, expressed in language level to the most ordinary understandings, escaped from him as if he himself were not aware of their terrible effect. Under these the most haughty of his opponents frequently winced. There was scarcely another man in the house of commons who could provoke Pitt to descend from the pedestal of his dignity.†

* Memoir in the New Monthly Magazine, for March, 1830, understood to be from the pen of a distinguished Whig nobleman.

† This sketch is derived from the notices which appeared in the

“Times” and other newspapers, immediately after Mr. Tierney’s death in 1830 ; from the Annual Obituary for 1830, and from the Memoir already quoted.

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Sir Francis Burdett also voted in the minority upon this proposition for reform. He had, when very young, become, somewhat unexpectedly, the inheritor of the ancient baronetcy attached to his family; and, after the usual routine of education and travel, he purchased, of the Duke of Newcastle, a seat for Boroughbridge. Sir Francis's first effort in the house was made in seconding a motion made by Fox. His present speech in favour of Mr. Grey's motion, consisting chiefly of commonplaces upon liberty, was his second effort; but he does not appear to have attracted any very great attention by his early speeches, until, with a humanity and perseverance highly honourable, he addressed himself to the exposure of the iniquitous system of secret imprisonment under which Pitt and Dundas had now filled all the gaols with parliamentary reformers—men who were cast into dungeons without any public accusation, and from whom the Habeas Corpus Suspension act had taken every hope of redress. The zeal of Sir Francis enlisted in his favour the sympathies of the people; and the leading democrats, who quickly perceived the advantage they might derive from his rank and fortune, advanced him to the head of their party. At this time Sir Francis spoke of universal suffrage as a subject for future consideration, but he soon amalgamated with his allies. Sir Francis Burdett will probably be known to posterity rather for the extreme

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democracy of his early tenets, and for the power which, prompted by those able men, Horne Tooke and William Cobbett, he wielded over the populace, than for any traces of superior talent in his speeches in parliament, or for any evidence of ability as a politician or a legislator.

Such were the chief additions made to the roll of conspicuous public men about this time.

The momentous period through which we are now passing, studded as it is with scenes of absorbing interest to the general historian, affords no resting-place to the elucidator of party principles; it is crowded to confusion with events: our business is almost entirely with opinions. When we have related that the Whigs protested against lavishing the blood of their countrymen, and mortgaging the industry of unborn generations in order to force upon France her ancient dynasty of despots, we can only pass over the struggle that ensued, or repeat in chronological regularity the repetition of their arguments and their defeats.

Pitt had effected what the wildest idolater of corruption, who ever preceded him, would have started at as an extravagant dream. He had bribed the whole of the middle class of the country. Never did England know such prosperous times, never was the road to affluence so open. By a species of financial necromancy, Pitt had called up the produce of the

labour of their remote descendants, and poured it all in lavish wantonness among his contemporaries. Contracts and jobs and pensions, the pebbles which make up the mountain of our national debt, rendered enormous fortunes rife throughout the nation; and these again were partly spent among the lower classes in exchange for their votes—in buying seats by which the heap might be increased. The golden Pactolus which rolled from the treasury had many branches; there was not a hamlet in the kingdom so humble, as not to be visited by some streamlet from the glittering tide.

The state of the Whig party is sufficiently shown by the fact that during the years 1798 and 1799, Mr. Grey, who although naturally possessed of considerable aristocratic feeling had declared in the house of commons that rather than have no reform, he would vote for universal suffrage—Mr. Grey, who was thus determined in favour of reform, abstained from introducing the subject. The Irish rebellion of 1798 produced the union of 1800, a measure which was opposed by the Whigs, on account of the iniquity of the means by which it was attained and the undisguised detestation of the whole Irish people. During the discussions on this question, Mr. Grey moved that it be an instruction to the committee to take into their consideration the most effectual means of providing for and securing the inde-

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pendence of parliament. This motion was rather directed against Pitt's scheme of Irish representation than founded on the necessity of parliamentary reform: it appears to have excited no great interest, and found only 34 supporters.

The union with Ireland introduced a new topic of party discussion, which quickly became only second to that of parliamentary reform. In transplanting the parliament of College Green to St. Stephen's, Pitt had transplanted the questions which were there debated; and, of these, none had been more important than the demand of the Catholics to be admitted to the common rights of citizens. Pitt, whose Toryism was rather the imperiousness of a haughty master, than the cautious cowardice of the miser of power, thought their complaints were just. In his private negotiations with the Irish popular leaders he probably promised that emancipation should be the sequel to the union. In his place in parliament he certainly gave an intimation, which from the mouth of a minister could receive no second interpretation.*

* Pitt's observations upon this subject are well worthy of insertion. dom, full concessions could be made to the Catholics without endangering the state and shaking

"No man can say that in the present state of things, and while Ireland remains a separate kingdom, the constitution of Ireland to its centre. On the other hand, without anticipating the discus-

Pitt was not a minister who governed by petty stratagems, by ambiguous professions, and by skilful shuffles: he was at least an honourable enemy. He prepared to fulfil the pledge he had given, and to admit the Catholics within the pale of the consti-

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sion or the propriety of agitating the question, or saying how soon or how late it may be fit to discuss it, two propositions are indisputable; first; when the conduct of the Catholics shall be such as to make it safe for the government to admit them to the participation of the privileges granted to those of the established religion; and when the temper of the times shall be favourable to such a measure—when these events take place, it is obvious that such a question may be agitated in a united imperial parliament with much greater safety than it could be in a separate legislature. In the second place, I think it certain, that for whatever period it may be thought necessary after the union to withhold from the Catholics the enjoyment of those advantages, many of the objections which at present arise out of their situation would be removed if the Protestant legislature were no longer separate and local, but

general and imperial; and the Catholics themselves would at once feel a mitigation of the most goading and irritating of their present causes of complaint. How far, in addition to this great and leading consideration, it may also be wise and practicable to accompany the measure, by some mode of relieving the lower orders from the pressure of tithes which, in many instances, operate at present as a great practical evil, or to make, under proper regulations, and without breaking in on the security of the present Protestant establishment, an effectual and adequate provision for the Catholic clergy, it is not now necessary to discuss. It is sufficient to say that these and all other subordinate points connected with the same subject are more likely to be permanently and satisfactorily settled by a united legislature, than by any local arrangements.” —*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxiv., col. 273.

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tution. It had been better for the character of George III. had he imitated the candour of his minister; had he told him that he had made a promise he would not be suffered to fulfil, before he had obtained the advantage to gain which that promise had been made. When Pitt proposed Catholic emancipation as one of the topics of the king's speech, for the session of 1801, the royal negative was at once interposed, and when Dundas persisted in his attempt to overcome his master's objections, the king abruptly terminated the conference, saying, "Scotch metaphysics cannot destroy religious obligations."*

Pitt immediately tendered his resignation, but remained in office, at the request of the king, until the supplies had been voted.

* Gifford's Life of Pitt, vol. iii., p. 637.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Addington administration—Peace of Amiens—Resignation of Mr. Addington—Pitt returns to office—Secession of the Grenvilles—Death of Pitt—Lord Grenville's administration, comprising "All the Talents"—The Catholic question—Death of Fox—Consequent ministerial arrangements—Dissolution of parliament—Refusal of the king to grant indulgence to the Catholics—Dismissal of ministers—Formation of a Tory cabinet under the Duke of Portland—Biographical anecdotes of Spencer Perceval—Of Lord Castlereagh—Irish policy of this ministry—Resuscitation of the question of reform—Curwen's bill—Boldness of Canning and the Tories in resisting every inquiry that might lead to reform—Motion of Sir Francis Burdett—Duel between Canning and Castlereagh—The Perceval administration—Committal of Sir Francis Burdett to the Tower—Incapacity of the king—The Regency bill.

ALL that was brilliant in Toryism passed from the cabinet with the late minister. When Pitt and Canning were withdrawn, with their satellites, nothing remained of the Tory party but the mere courtiers who lived upon the favour of the king, and the insipid lees of the party; men who voted upon every subject in accordance with their one ruling idea—the

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certain ruin which must follow the first particle of innovation.

Yet from these relicts the king was obliged to form a new cabinet, for application to the Whigs was out of the question. These were more strenuous for emancipation than Pitt.* Henry Addington, Pitt's speaker of the house of commons, was the person upon whom the king's choice fell; and he succeeded, with the assistance of the late premier, in filling up the offices at his disposal. We are not now surprised to find the Duke of Portland gazetted as president of the council in a ministry formed upon a triumph of religious bigotry.

The peace of Amiens was the great work of this feeble administration, and formed a severe commentary upon the boastings of the Tories. "Unless the monarchy of France be restored," Pitt had said, eight years before, "the monarchy of England is lost for ever." Eight years of warfare had succeeded, yet the monarchy of France was not restored, and the crusade was stayed. England had surrendered

* As appeared in the debate upon the address at the commencement of the session. "I should, indeed, have augured more favourably of the union, had I found that the speech from the throne contained a recommendation (as it was reported it would do), to consider of taking off those disabilities to which the Catholics of Ireland are subject." —*Mr. Grey's Speech on the Address. Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxv., col. 893.

her conquests, France retained hers; the landmarks of Europe had been in some degree restored; England, alone, remained burdened with the enduring consequences of the ruinous and useless strife.

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The peace was approved by the Whigs, who were glad of any respite from such a war, and by Pitt, who gave his support to the Addington administration. But he could not control his adherents; Windham stigmatized it as an armed truce, and Canning was only restrained by his personal obligation to Pitt from throwing his weight into the same scale. Pitt's influence in the house of commons continued as great as ever; and when an ill-advised motion was made to censure his administration, an amendment, conveying an express vote of approval, was carried by a majority of 211 to 52.

As the instability of the peace grew manifest, the incompetency of the administration became generally acknowledged: with Pitt* sometimes chiding, Windham† and Canning, and Lords Spencer and Grenville continually attacking, and Fox and the Whigs only refraining from violent opposition from a knowledge that if Addington went out Pitt would be

* See his speech on Mr. Patten's motion.—*Parl. Hist.*, vol. xxxvi., col. 1570.

† A debate in the committee on the Military Service bill, introduced Mr. Windham panegyricizing William Cobbett, whose Political

Register was now in being. He said that writer merited a statue of gold for his conduct in America; that he had resolutely opposed all the bad principles which Mr. Fox had so often urged in the house.

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his successor, the conduct of the government was by no means an easy or a grateful task to a man destitute of commanding talents. When to these parliamentary difficulties were added a recommencement of the war, and a popular panic at Bonaparte's threatened invasion, Addington's embarrassments became inextricable. He had performed the business which Pitt had assigned him; he had made an experimental peace, and had saved Pitt's honour with the Roman Catholics. The object of his appointment he had unconsciously completed, and no sooner did his predecessor manifest an intention of returning to office, than the ministerial majorities began to diminish, and Addington found himself without support. On the 12th of April it was announced that Mr. Addington had resigned, and Pitt appeared to resume his station as a matter of course.*

During his temporary retirement, Pitt had, however, lost one section of his supporters. The Grenville party and the Whigs had gradually approximated, and the former now refused to come into the new

* In a memorandum circulated in Ireland, and sent in the name of the Marquis Cornwallis, Pitt promised the Catholics "to do his utmost to establish their cause in the public favour, and prepare the way for their finally attaining their objects." See

these papers in the Parl. Hist vol. xxxv., col. 966. In the second, Pitt is alluded to as pledged not to embark in the service of government except on terms of the Catholic privileges being obtained.

arrangements unless Fox was introduced into the cabinet. To this Pitt offered no objection, but the king was firm—or obstinate, and Pitt did not consider the refusal as any insurmountable impediment to his own resumption of the government. The changes, therefore, were not considerable. Pitt, attended by Dundas, now created Lord Melville, Canning and Huskisson, infused into the cabinet the talent of which it had been so lamentably deficient; and in the following year, Addington himself, now created Viscount Sidmouth, returned to office with the subordinate appointment of president of the council.

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The conflagration had again spread through Europe. England again strained herself to pull down the greatness of France, and to arouse, at any sacrifice, the energies of her torpid allies. But although checked upon the ocean by the heroism of Nelson, by land the wonderful man, who now as her emperor guided her destinies, was still omnipotent, and Pitt had the mortification to see his grand continental coalition, the produce of such immense expense and the object of such hope, shattered in one campaign. At home, Lord Melville, his most faithful political supporter, was attacked by a charge from which he could not defend him, and underwent the impeachment of the commons for malpractices in his office as treasurer of the navy. Lord Sidmouth and several others seceded from the cabinet, and

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Pitt, broken in health, and dispirited by reverses, had lost much of his wonted energy.

Thus passed away the year 1805. On the 23d of January, 1806, Pitt expired.—At a time when the whole political horizon was enveloped in darkness, when little hope appeared of the ultimate attainment of his dearest objects, and when the whirl of events around him might well call forth his last patriotic aspiration, “O save my country, Heaven!”

Pitt was a man of high ambition and strong lust of power; qualities which, according to the situation of the possessor, will make either a patriot or a tyrant. Untainted by the suspicion of a sordid vice, indifferent to the wealth and titles for which his followers were scrambling, Pitt appeared to move apart from the herd of men, and, wrapped in his own dignity, to look with contempt upon their petty ambition. His ability was great, but it was inferior to his confidence; that confidence rendered him intolerant of opposition; it induced him to undertake an unwise, but, as he evidently thought, an easy project, and to persevere through disasters which would have deterred any other statesman. Let those statesmen who hope to gild over disastrous policy by shining talents, peruse the speeches of Windham and Fox, upon the motion for bestowing upon Pitt national honours.* The deliberate judgments of a

* Hansard's Parl. Debates, vol. vi. Cobbett's Parliamentary History; We have now taken leave of the most valuable historical work

colleague and an opponent scarcely vary. They both deem him unworthy of national gratitude, or of the title of an excellent statesman. The veneration which, in the minds of those who gained fortunes and titles during his lavish administration, attached to the name of Pitt, is now fast fading. We begin to look upon him as a statesman whose lofty bearing and personal integrity cloaked a system fraught with corruption and ruin; and we abandon his shrine to men, who, in their anxiety to claim the protection of some one historical character, adopt, as their tutelary saint, a man whose best title to the respect of posterity is, that he opposed their policy and detested their principles.

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The death of Pitt was the dissolution of his administration. The Tory party was scattered in divisions and subdivisions innumerable. Canning now recognised no political leader, but retained his old contempt for Sidmouth and his friends, and his hostility to the Grenvilles for their breach with Pitt. Castlereagh, William Dundas, Hawkesbury, or Barham, although sufficiently effective when Pitt was present to direct and to defend, would have made a

in our language. It requires no little resolution to sink a shaft into that solid mass of mixed ore and rubbish which succeeds it, and which, however valuable for the purpose of detecting individual inconsistencies, will, perhaps, render

the debates of this century as little known as those of the time of Queen Anne. These voluminous reports of unimportant debates will, in time, form rather an embarrassing monument of the vanity of our senators.

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hopeless figure without him in face of such an opposition as the house of commons now afforded.

The administration, which was ironically designated by its opponents as "All the Talents," succeeded. Lord Grenville was first lord of the treasury. Fox chose the office of secretary for foreign affairs with the hope of putting an end to the war. Windham was colonial secretary. Earl Spencer had the seals of the home department. Erskine was lord chancellor. Mr. Grey was first lord of the admiralty. Sheridan, treasurer of the navy. Lord Sidmouth was privy seal. Lord Henry Petty, who,* although now only in his 26th year, had already acquired considerable distinction as an eloquent Whig speaker, was advanced to the post of chancellor of the exchequer, the vacant chair of Pitt.

Such were the men who now assumed the reins under circumstances of unparalleled difficulty; their policy detested by the majority with which Pitt had packed the house of peers, and themselves in some instances labouring under the personal antipathy of the sovereign. Unfortunately for the popularity of these illustrious men, they found a war, which the majority of them had ever deprecated, in full activity, and they did not think fit to copy the ancient precedents established by Tory ministers, of making an immediate peace at any sacrifice. The people, who

* The present Marquis of Lansdowne.

expected a prompt reduction of taxation, were disappointed; the Tories, who knew how little the king and his ministers agreed upon the Catholic question, raised the cry of "No Popery," and Canning, in the house of commons, lost no opportunity of attacking them with all his powers of wit and eloquence.

The acts of this administration offer no prominent subjects of remark; we may notice, however, that Fox, even under the peculiar circumstances of the time, did not tamper with his principles of religious toleration. Knowing that his tenure of office depended upon the non-agitation of the Catholic claims, he nevertheless stated in reply to a question put to him in the house of commons, that he was ready to advocate them, as he always had advocated them, whenever the subject should be brought forward.

I have made little mention of the continued contests upon the abolition of the slave trade, for that was not a party question. Pitt and Fox, Sheridan and Canning, Windham and Whitbread, were all agreed upon the principle of this measure. It is pleasing to find it making some real advancement under this administration; and to see the kind and openhearted Charles Fox making almost his last speech in parliament a successful effort in its favour.

This great man did not long survive his rival. When he assumed the duties of office he was evidently in a declining state. The onerous labours of

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the house of commons, which he never could be prevailed upon to intermit, and the ceaseless attacks of Canning, and other less worthy antagonists, wore him out. A dropsy, to which medicine could give no alleviation, made rapid progress ; and his dangerous illness and dissolution were announced in quick succession. He expired on the 13th of September, bequeathing to after British statesmen an example of noble simplicity of conduct, of high and disinterested motives, of comprehensive and liberal policy, and of active and zealous philanthropy, which the best and brightest leaders of future generations may be proud to imitate.

The two rival statesmen who had so long divided the suffrages of the nation now slept in peace side by side ; and with them passes away that surprising brilliancy which gives such interest to the political contests of the North and Pitt administrations. Sheridan, indeed, still remained ; but Sheridan, broken in spirit, involved in inextricable embarrassments, and incapable of that laborious application by which his apparently impromptu efforts were always preceded, was no longer the same man who had so cruelly lashed Dundas, and had so pertinaciously tormented Pitt. He now appeared as a speaker much less frequently. His dearest friends and his most worthy foes were gone, and he now evidently took little interest in party politics.

By the ministerial arrangements consequent upon the death of Fox, Mr. Grey, who, by reason of his father having been created Earl Grey, was now become Lord Howick, succeeded to the vacant secretaryship. Mr. Grenville received the admiralty; Tierney succeeded him as president of the board of control; and Lord Sidmouth exchanged his office of lord privy seal for that of president of the council. By this arrangement only one cabinet office was left vacant. This was bestowed upon Lord Holland, the nephew of Fox, who had already, in the house of peers, taught those who had sneered at him for his youth to respect him for his talent. He had been, for some time, one of the few Whig noblemen who persevered in their attendance in the house of lords, and who had so vainly opposed argument and eloquence to the proxies of Pitt's peers.* The unwavering consistency of this eminent member of the Whig party may be applauded even by a contemporary, for the journals of the house of lords are its vouchers; but his importance as a party man, and his powers of light and graceful oratory, cannot be

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* The possessors of Sir Egerton Brydges's edition of "Collins's Peerage," have a striking example of the rapidity of Pitt creations. The eighth volume of that work consists of an account of sixty-one

barons created, by this minister, within sixteen years, and whose titles were all in being when the work was published.—This was one order of the peerage.

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historically estimated by one who sees them in full operation.

A dissolution of parliament followed the completion of these arrangements, and the Whigs, of course, gained considerably. Sheridan succeeded Fox for Westminster. Mr. Paull, the democrat candidate, was rejected; and even Sir Francis Burdett, his patron, having commenced his canvass with a slur upon the memory of Fox,* and a sneer at the patriotism of Lord Howick,† was unseated for Middlesex.

In the following year the cabinet of which Fox had formed so conspicuous a member, perished in an attempt to pursue his policy; the ministers having supposed they had obtained the king's consent, introduced a bill, extending to all British subjects, without distinction of religion, the privilege of serving in the army and navy. It was vehemently opposed by the Tories; but was, nevertheless, carried through its earliest stages by a considerable majority. At this juncture the king interposed, withdrew his consent, insisted that the bill should be abandoned, and required a pledge from his ministers that they would never advise any similar measure. To such a pledge,

* Address to the Middlesex Electors, in the "Morning Chronicle" for October 29, 1806.

† Speech reported in Cobbett's Political Register for 1806, p. 742.

as unconstitutional in itself, and inconsistent with their oaths as privy councillors, the Whigs refused to subscribe, and, determined that the cause of their retiring from office should be well defined, they, instead of resigning, waited for a formal dismissal.

Under a monarch thus determined in his resolve, and holding in his own hands the majority of the house of commons, all interest in party struggles must be at an end. It is evident that nothing but a revolution could have procured toleration to the principles of the Whigs. Nothing can more clearly prove the subserviency of the house of commons as at this time constructed, than that the same assembly which had pronounced in favour of the Grenville Catholic bill readily turned over to a Tory administration, and refused, by a majority of 32, to vote that it was contrary to the duties of a minister to restrain himself by a pledge as to the advice he should offer to the king.

The composition of a new ministry was confided to the Duke of Portland, who replaced Lord Eldon upon the woolsack ; committed Ireland to Earl Camden, and the admiralty to Lord Mulgrave ; appointed Lord Castlereagh, Lord Hawkesbury, and Canning, the three secretaries of state, and Mr. Perceval chancellor of the exchequer.

Among the members of this cabinet are two men who require some particular notice, chiefly on account

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of the conspicuous place they successively held as leaders of their party. Spencer Perceval, the new chancellor of the exchequer, was born in 1762, the second son of the Earl of Egmont; he was educated at Harrow, and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where his ability and unwearied assiduity procured him deserved distinction. In 1781 Perceval was called to the bar, and soon acquired the character of a timorous speaker, but a diligent lawyer. His professional success does not appear to have been very great; since a biographer, who shows every disposition to glorify his memory, does not estimate his income, even after he had been attorney-general, at 3000*l.* a year.* But Perceval lived at a time when even moderate talent was eagerly sought. A clever pamphlet upon the question as to the abatement of Warren Hastings's impeachment made him known to Pitt. He received the appointment of deputy recorder of Northampton; and at the next vacancy was returned to parliament for that borough. In parliament Perceval became conspicuous for his extreme horror of popery, and his violent advocacy of what the Tories called the Protestant interest. These qualities rendered him dear to his master and useful to the minister. Under the Addington ministry he became solicitor-general and attorney-general successively.

* Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxii., p. 591.

He was now allured, by the offer of the chancellorship of Lancaster for life, to abandon his profession altogether. Mr. Perceval was ready in debate, well acquainted with parliamentary tactics, a placid and not ungraceful speaker, and an excellent man; but those who believed a story circulated after his death, to the effect that Pitt, when proceeding to the ground on the morning of his duel with Tierney, mentioned Perceval as the only other man who could cope with Fox, and recommended him as his successor in case he should be killed—must either have forgotten that Canning had appeared, or must have a poor opinion of the judgment of Pitt. The estimation in which Perceval was held by his party, was produced less by his parliamentary ability, in which he surpassed very few of his colleagues, than by his known influence with the king. That influence was obtained by his conscientious zeal in swelling the shout of “No popery,” and his undeviating hostility to every thing which was disapproved by the established church.

A second member of this administration, having a place among the minor lights of the Tory party, is Lord Castlereagh, the new secretary at war.

Lord Castlereagh was born in 1769, and is said to have exhibited, as a boy, many instances of that personal intrepidity which he, upon all occasions, manifested in manhood. He discovered an early taste

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for a political life ; and soon after he became of age his father spent 30,000*l.* in obtaining for him a seat in the Irish parliament, for the county of Down. Having gained his election the young nobleman made his entrance upon this stage as a parliamentary reformer ; cultivated a friendship with the most determined patriots of that country ; and, if not a member, was certainly an approver and a patron of the Society of United Irishmen, established at Belfast in 1792. It would be vain to speculate upon the causes of the conversion of so sanguine an Irish patriot ; but in 1795 we find him seated among Pitt's supporters in the British house of commons, and seconding the ministerial address. Having acquired the requisite experience under Pitt's tuition, he was, in 1797, again transferred to the Irish parliament, and he was made chief secretary to the lord lieutenant. In this situation he was very active in all the negotiations which produced the Irish union, and when the object had been accomplished, he returned to England. Under the Addington administration, he obtained the post of president of the board of control, which he retained when Pitt returned, but relinquished in 1805, for the more honourable office of secretary for the war and colonial departments. Lord Castlereagh was a man of considerable ability, a debater of some tact, and a Tory of great determination. In private life, he is said to have exhibited unassuming man-

ners, simple tastes, and a kind and generous disposition.

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During the debates which followed the entrance of this ministry upon office, the recriminations were hot and frequent. The Whigs accused the Tories of having bought their return to power by a sacrifice of the constitution. The Tories replied, "No popery!" and designated the Whigs as persons under the control of the White-boys of Ireland.* "Concessions," said Perceval, "only serve to keep Ireland in an unsettled state. There is only this alternative, to establish the Catholic church in Ireland, or to preserve the Protestant establishment in its full strength."† The difference between the last and the present administration was well drawn by a speaker upon the motion for approving the conduct of the Grenville administration. "There was," he would admit, "much shrewdness, great dexterity, and considerable talent among the present administration. But as to those great and commanding qualities which should characterize the government of a country, maintaining the pre-eminent situation that this did, they were removed from their predecessors to an incalculable distance."‡

The persevering resolution of the king in refusing

* Annual Register for 1807, p.

152. Hansard's Debates, vol. ix.,

col. 301.

† Hansard's Debates, vol. ix.,

col. 320.

‡ Ibid., vol. ix., col. 304.

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to hear of any proposition of Catholic emancipation, had reduced Ireland to a state bordering on rebellion; and serious apprehensions were entertained, that if any body of French troops should effect a landing in that island they would be joined by the great mass of the population. This ministry, instead of a measure of conciliation, inflicted a Coercion bill, disarming the people in the disaffected districts, and directing the arrest of those who should be found out of their houses between sunset and sunrise. That bill was introduced upon the motion of Sir A. Wellesley, and bore his name—a name which was not yet known to England as her second and her greater Marlborough. Since all ideas of concession were repudiated, this measure was, doubtless, become necessary, and Sir Arthur Wellesley's bill was well adapted to the object proposed—that of ruling Ireland by the sword.

In the session of 1808 several distinct cases brought forward by the Whigs, of interference with the independence of electors seemed to promise some resuscitation to the question of reform. These complaints received importance from the contemporaneous accusations against the Duke of York, and from a general sentiment which now prevailed, that every department of the government was crowded with abuses. While the feeling was yet fresh, Mr. Curwen, an old Whig member, brought forward a bill, not for altering the representation, but

for discouraging bribery, and suppressing the at present notorious marketing for seats, by imposing an oath upon the sitting member. The arguments against the introduction of this measure were from Windham, that it was a project of parliamentary reform, and from Mr. Perceval, that it held out to the people hopes of reform that would never be realized. The latter, nevertheless, consented to its introduction, reserving his opposition to its future stages.

Mr. Curwen's bill was aided by a charge brought by Mr. Maddocks against Perceval and Castle-reagh, of having compelled Mr. Quintin Dick, who sat for a treasury borough, to resign his seat in consequence of his known intention to vote against the Duke of York during the late inquiries into his conduct. Into this charge the Tories refused to enter. Canning denouncing it as the first step towards parliamentary reform, and calling upon the house to make a determined stand against the encroachments of the factious. A majority of 310 to 85, encouraged the ministers to continue to deride the idea of purity of election.

The disclosures and consequent agitation which had taken place were, nevertheless, productive of some fruits. Mr. Curwen's bill, after suffering con-

* Hansard's Debates, vol. ix., col. 523.

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siderable mutilation* from the hands of the Tories, was suffered to pass into a law, and the words parliamentary reform were again occasionally heard in parliament. Sir Francis Burdett at last reproduced the question before the house. The plan which Sir Francis submitted, included—the extension of the suffrage to all who were subject to direct taxation—the subdivision of counties into districts according to the number of electors; the votes of each district to be taken by the parish officer upon one and the same day, and—that parliament should be brought back to a constitutional duration.

These propositions Sir Francis enforced in a speech of considerable length, bearing marks of careful preparation; and he was seconded by Mr. Maddocks. But the debate which ensued is by no means of important interest. The house was so evidently hostile to the mover, that Perceval felt himself able to treat the motion with levity, and excused himself from replying at any great length,

* Windham said that the bill, proposition to change its title to was so completely changed, that “A bill for more effectually preventing the sale of seats in parliament for money, and for promoting a monopoly thereof to the treasury, by means of patronage.”—*Parl. Deb.*, vol. xiv., col. 1015.

from an apprehension "lest he might thereby raise the plan of the honourable baronet into an importance which it did not deserve." There were no illustrious names among the Whigs who spoke, to give it splendour. Of those who had mingled as equals with Fox and Burke, Sheridan was grown indolent and silent, and Lord Howick, as Earl Grey, had taken his seat among the peers.* Whitbread, Tierney, and the Whigs, could not forget that the present mover had profaned the memory of Fox, and had ridiculed the patriotism of his surviving friend. A line of conduct which would probably have been treated with disregard by Earl Grey, was resented by his friends: the Whigs absented themselves; and Sir Francis obtained but fifteen votes in favour of his motion.

The present administration of the Duke of Portland was terminated by a dispute between Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning. Canning thinking Castlereagh unequal to the war department, a judgment which the disastrous expedition to Walcheren in this year too fatally confirmed, had demanded his dismissal, and had received a promise that he should

* Earl Grey succeeded his father in his peerage, November 14, 1807. On the other side, Lord Hawkesbury in November, 1808, and succeeding his father Jenkinson, the early friend of Canning, was also seated among the peers, having been created in the earldom of Liverpool within a month after his creation.

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be removed, so soon as it could be done upon terms which would be satisfactory to himself. Canning disapproved the delay, but continued to transact business with Castlereagh, who had no intimation of what had taken place. At length, Canning grew imperative; the Duke of Portland found he could not fulfil his promise and resigned. Castlereagh discovered what had been arranged, threw up his appointment, called Canning to an account, and wounded him in a duel. Canning also resigned, and the administration was thus dissolved.*

The Tory party appeared now so destitute of men of eminence to form a ministry, that proposals were made to Lords Grey and Grenville to coalesce with Perceval. But to these statesmen the terms upon which the late ministry had been appointed were an insurmountable objection: they refused to treat. Perceval, therefore, received the high office, and the Marquis of Wellesley, the Earl of Liverpool, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Ryder, were his principal associates. Lord Eldon and several others of the old ministers retained their appointments.

At the meeting of parliament, in January 1810, the Perceval administration was fully formed, and it soon appeared that the house of lords would now be

* The correspondence upon be read in all the periodicals of this subject, and especially Canning's letter to Earl Camden, may the time.

the theatre of the severest conflict. Not that the minister had any cause to fear the numbers of the Whigs in that assembly ; but they had there arrayed against them all the remains of the Augustan age of British eloquence—Grey, Grenville, Erskine, with Holland and Lansdowne,* who, although they had not fought as equals with the great men of the last generation, had arisen in turn to kindle their torches from theirs—these men now from the opposition benches of the lords, pointed their indignant eloquence against the weakness, the incapacity, and the bigotry of this administration, and, save the Earl of Liverpool, could find none to answer them but by their votes.

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The subject of the debates in the lords were generally the conduct of the war, and the causes of disasters ; but the commons soon found means to embroil themselves with the people. When the ministry were compelled to grant some species of inquiry into the expedition to the Scheldt they also determined to close the strangers' gallery during the investigation. Sheridan, Lord Folkestone, Tierney, and the rest of the Whigs, assisted also by Sir Francis Burdett, protested against this proceeding, and proposed to modify the standing order. Per-

* Lord Henry Petty succeeded his brother as Marquis of Lansdowne in 1809.

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ceval persevered, and was aided by Windham, who thought the maintenance of the standing order protected the nation from that despotism which had so lately desolated other countries. Windham spoke of the contributors to the daily press as bankrupts, lottery-office keepers, footmen, and decayed tradesmen, and of the press itself as an engine always to be purchased by the highest bidder. Windham, like his great Apollo, Burke, when it was his cue to speak Toryism, soared beyond all bounds, and left the regular professors of the creed in admiration at his superior boldness. Upon this occasion, Perceval availed himself of his aid, and negatived Sheridan's motion, but he did not repeat Windham's anathema against the press.

John Gale Jones, the president of a debating society, held a discussion, and published some resolutions upon this debate, and the Tories of the house of commons thought it consistent with their dignity to call him to their bar and commit him to Newgate. This Mr. Gale Jones was a person of considerable authority among the frequenters of the British forum and similar institutions ; and now that his importance became increased by the persecution of the commons, his popularity threatened to eclipse that of more established demagogues. Sir Francis Burdett prevented this : he delivered in the house of commons a speech denying the power of the commons to com-

mit to prison any but their own members ; but finding only thirteen members to support him in so flagrant an attack upon the existence of the house, he repeated his arguments in a letter to his constituents, published in "Cobbett's Weekly Register," and this letter being brought before the house, he was ordered to the Tower.

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The offence of Sir Francis Burdett was indisputable. The power of committal in the commons is essential to their efficiency ; but it is a power which will not bear to be imprudently or violently used, or to be exercised at all by an assembly in which the people have not confidence. Crowds surrounded the house of Sir Francis, who affected to resist the warrant by force, and barricadoed his doors. Twenty police officers, assisted by detachments of cavalry and infantry, were necessary to execute the warrant. Burdett still resisted ; and lest the theatrical display should be incomplete, the constables, when they broke into the house, found him teaching his infant son to read and translate Magna Charta. As he was borne along to the Tower, the crowds assembled attacked the soldiery ; pistol-shots

* The Whigs also voted for the release of Jones, but upon a different principle. He had, before the house, expressed contrition for his offence, and Sheridan expressed himself anxious to rescue the house from its contest with the British Forum.—*Parl. Debates*, vol. xv.

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were fired on each side, and the troops did not return from their ungrateful duty without a sanguinary conflict in which several people were slain. A more useless, or unnecessary provocation of a scene of carnage does not occur in our history.

Sir Francis brought an action against the speaker; and being defeated, thus had the merit of formally establishing the important principle of the constitution which he had attacked.

During this session no other subject obtained attention except the imprisonment of Sir Francis Burdett. The Whigs made motions against sinecures,* for Catholic emancipation,† and for parliamentary reform;‡ but neither of these questions had any chance within doors, and the whole attention without was monopolized by the democratic party.

In November the parliament which lay under prorogation, was suddenly called together by the illness of the king, whose grief, occasioned by the death of his youngest and favourite daughter, had produced a recurrence of the malady that had before suspended his reason. A repetition of the contests which had taken place in 1788 now took place. Perceval, who feebly sustained the part of Pitt, was armed with a

* By Mr. Bankes.

234 to 115. The minority is in-

† By Grattan. The division
was 213 to 109.creased this year, because the pro-
position was such as the Whigs

‡ By Mr. Brand.

Division

could vote for.

precedent, and the celebrated answer of the prince, formerly composed by Burke, was again brought into use by Sheridan. The claim of right, so imprudently advanced by Fox, was not, however, renewed. Experience of what had before occurred, and the expectations of recovery held forth by the physicians, rendered the opposition feeble. The principal restrictions upon the authority of the regent were to cease in February, 1812; and, satisfied with this early period, the Whigs appeared contented to let the bill pass.

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At the passing of this Regency bill, the reign of George III. may be said to have terminated. Henceforward George IV. reigned, although for some years under the title of a regent.

At the death of George II. we took a review of a long period of Whig rule. The term of Toryism is not yet accomplished; but the fifty years which have elapsed since the death of that monarch, and during which the Tories, if not in the commons, yet in the peers and in the court, have been uniformly dominant, offer a retrospect unhappily contrasting with the picture we then drew. The burdens of the country increased to an amount which our forefathers would have deemed incredible, and their descendants find almost intolerable; the heroism of our countrymen shining as it always has done, yet without any per-

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ceptible effect; the nation still involved in a war which threatened its existence, and committed to a dispute with a maritime power which was then dependent, but was now a rival—and all these contests commenced against the opposition of the Whigs, for tyranny in America and despotism in Europe—these were the effects of Tory influence upon our foreign and colonial policy. At home we have to view a long period of popular discontent restrained by treason—trials, and military slaughter; or of popular applause gained by universal corruption; the suspension of the safeguards of English liberty; the continuance of religious discord; the undisguised disaffection of Ireland; and the accumulation of abuses which clogged every wheel of government; a penal code the most bloody in Europe; and a government the most expensive that history had ever known—these were the effects of the reign of a Tory monarch, who was lauded by the Tory party as the best of kings, and who was, in his private relations, a moral and respectable man.

If we compare the characters of George II. and George III., we shall seek in vain for the superiority in that of the former, which rendered his reign so prosperous, while that of his successor was so disastrous. The solution of the problem must be sought in the principles of their government. Under the

one monarch, the counsels of the nation were directed by Whigs, who guided the progress of liberty, under the other by Tories, who in attempting to extinguish liberty gave birth to licentiousness.

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CHAPTER XIX.

Views of the two parties—The Prince Regent abandons the Whig party—Lord Morpeth's motion for Catholic emancipation—Robert Peel—Refusal of the Whigs to coalesce with the Tory ministry—Assassination of Perceval—Ministerial negotiations—The Liverpool administration—Canning's motion for Catholic emancipation—Conclusion of the war—Revival of popular interest in domestic questions—Scarcity and riots of 1716—Suspension of the Habeas Corpus act—Coercion bills—Massacre at Manchester.—Indignation of the people—Shared by the Whigs—Castlereagh's Six Acts—Lord John Russell's motion on the subject of parliamentary reform—Death of George III.

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THAT very ambiguous phrase, "the British constitution," has two distinct meanings; and its interpretation must depend upon the party of the person by whom it is pronounced. In the mouth of a Whig it is a democracy tempered, but not controlled, by the prerogatives of a sovereign and the intervention of an aristocracy—in the mouth of a Tory, since the accession of the house of Hanover, it is an aristo-

cracy fortified with all the prerogatives of the crown, and tempered, but not controlled, by the admixture of a portion of popular influence.*

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According to the Tory idea of perfection the constitution was now perfect. The peers, by virtue of their nomination boroughs, could direct the exercise of the prerogative; and, with the sovereign's assistance, they could command a majority in the house of commons; yet there was still a strong minority returned to that house by the popular voice, which had an influence on its deliberations although it could not direct its decisions.

The Whigs, of course, thought the British constitution destroyed; and they had decided upon the measures necessary to its restoration. These were, by stripping the aristocracy of their nomination boroughs, to restore the democracy of the house of commons, and by depriving the church of its monopoly of political power, to further weaken the aristocracy by diminishing the political influence of its (after the house of commons) most powerful engine.

Practically, therefore, it was, by the Whigs, deemed necessary to the restoration of the constitution, that

* Many theorists amused themselves with the idea of an impossible equipoise of power; but I deduce the principles of the parties from their acts. Each party has occasionally talked of our balanced constitution, but neither has ever acted with a view to place the scales exactly even.

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a repeal of the Test act, an emancipation of the Catholics, and a reform in parliament, should take place. It was upon these questions that the parties really contended. It is to the progress and conclusion of these contests that we must now hasten.

The Prince of Wales had been long associated with the Whigs, because they had long opposed his father's government. From that party he had received protection and derived consequence, and while he placed himself under the guidance of Fox he avowed himself "a party man." But of the principles of his party he probably knew little, and liked still less.

When the Regency bill had passed, the prince intrusted Lords Grenville and Grey with the task of drawing up his answer to the address of the houses of parliament. One of the embarrassing consequences of coalition now appeared. In the discussions upon the regency question in 1789, these political allies had been opponents; and it was a necessary, but very difficult, part of their commission, to preserve the consistency of the prince and Earl Grey, without palpably betraying that of Lord Grenville. This difficulty, the answer submitted to the prince did not very skilfully surmount, and his royal highness objected to almost every part of it. Sheridan then, by command of the prince, drew up a second answer, and he and Mr. Adam were sent with the new draft

to Holland House. A warm discussion ensued; Sheridan's answer was adopted; but Lords Grey and Grenville presented a joint representation to the king, severely reflecting upon Sheridan's interference.

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This remonstrance was quite sufficient to disgust the prince with Whiggism. Counsellors were not wanting to strengthen his displeasure, and after allowing them to go on for some time in daily expectation of their dismissal, he at length, to the surprise of the Tories, signified to Perceval and his colleagues his resolution of retaining them as his ministers.

During the debates of this year many instances occurred to exemplify the impunity with which injustice may be committed under the Tory constitution. Sir Francis Burdett, Mr. Brougham, and Colonel Wardle brought the subject of military flogging before parliament. Colonel Wardle detailed the case of a man, who being found guilty of speaking disrespectfully of his colonel was sentenced to receive 1000 lashes. When he received his sentence he was so weak that he was obliged to be supported at the halberds, and having received 200 strokes was confined to the hospital under the endurance of excruciating agony from August to November, when he was offered the alternative of being taken forth to be again mangled, or to serve for life in a condemned

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regiment in the West Indies. Rather than expire under the lash he chose the latter punishment. Out of the whole house of commons no member could be found to second Colonel Wardle's motion for inquiry into this horrible case except the colonel of the regiment in which it had taken place. He was confident that no more had been done than was necessary to military discipline. Such an atrocity might have occurred under the Whigs, but that party would not have had the boldness to refuse an inquiry.

While Perceval and his party continued in power, the progress of any one of the three Whig measures could not be expected. The complaints of Ireland could not be stifled, but they were punished, and Wellesley Pole's efforts in this way form the frequent subject of parliamentary discussion. The Catholic question was brought forward by the Earl of Donoughmore in the lords, and Grattan in the commons, but both motions were rejected by large majorities.* The question of parliamentary reform fared

* Lord Sidmouth introduced a bill to amend the act of Toleration, by placing restrictions upon the licences of dissenting teachers. But the dissenters immediately took the alarm; and the table of the house was covered with petitions against it. Lords Holland and Erskine powerfully enforced these petitions, and even the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Eldon, although highly approving of the bill, thought it unwise to press it.

no better, and it was evident that the Tory ministry of Perceval, and the once Whig Prince of Wales were now thoroughly consentient.

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Early in 1812 an important attempt was made to achieve Catholic emancipation. The regent was understood to be favourable to the measure, and it was imagined that upon this subject he and his new friends might disagree. The motion was brought forward in the commons by Lord Morpeth. During the debate some wavering was observable in the Tory ranks. Canning, who had always treated the question as one of expediency, although he still voted with the Tories, began to prepare the way for a change. "When," he said, "I look to the present state of Ireland, with a great and growing population—a population growing not in numbers only but in wealth and intelligence, and aspiring from what they have already tasted of freedom, to a more enlarged and equal enjoyment of privileges from which they are still excluded; when I consider that to this situation they have been gradually raised from a condition wherein no class of people had ever before been placed by the laws of a Christian country; I cannot think it probable that in this situation they should long contentedly continue: neither can I think it wise, if it were practicable, to determine upon permanently shutting them out from the pale

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of the constitution.” Even Wellesley Pole, after setting forth at full length the violent things the Catholics had said against him, in return for his proclamations and prosecutions, as his reason for voting against them, found it expedient to conclude with a promise, that if at any time he should see a proper temper and disposition actuating the body of the Catholics, he should be the last man in the house to oppose their pretensions. A speaker also, who was often alluded to in the debate as a young member, and who had recently appeared among the Tory party, declared that although he then gave his vote against a motion, which in the present instance was, at least, unnecessary, he would by no means pledge himself with regard to the Catholic question. This was Robert Peel, the future leader of the Tory party, the future instrument of the triumph of the great question which he now opposed : a man, who in parliamentary tact and thorough knowledge of the house of commons, yields to no Tory chief who has preceded him ; who in eloquence yields only to those of the highest order, and who, had he been trusted by his party in council, as he has been relied on by them in action, would probably have obtained for them a long monopoly of power ; yielding

* Parl. Debates, vol. xxi., p. 250.

gradually, but gracefully, to the force of public opinion, and even wresting from the Whigs the honour of those reforms which were the natural offspring of their exertions. Mr. Peel was already a man far in advance of his party; a man whose intellect and political views belonged to the same class as those of Pitt and Canning.

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The sentiments of the Tory party are, however, rather to be read in the speech of the premier. “ I have before said, and I see no reason to alter my opinion, that I could not conceive a time or any change of circumstances which could render further concession to the Catholics consistent with the safety of the state.”* This was the speech which drew forth the loudest cheers from the treasury benches, and formed the theme of no popery sermons, and the rallying cry of no popery mobs. This was recognised as orthodox Toryism.

The Whigs were not wanting in argument or eloquence. Lord George Grenville powerfully contrasted the demeanour of the Catholic with the petulance of his persecutor. Sheridan laughed at the absurdity of a man’s violently abusing another for incivility of language, and Whitbread fixed with considerable pertinacity upon the inconsistencies of Canning. “ Is this,” he said,

* Parl. Debates, vol. xxi., p. 663.

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“really the man who has hitherto been the enemy of the Catholic claims—who when in office distinguished himself as the strenuous opposer of Catholic concession—who concurred in the vote which went to disqualify a Catholic from being a bank director in Ireland—who was of opinion with his late colleagues that it was dangerous for a Catholic to become an admiral or a general? Alas! such is the inconsistency of human nature, this is the very man!” Other speakers showed the insufficiency of replying to a demand for justice that the claimant was importunate and loud; and Grattan protested against the protection of the established church being made the pretext for refusing liberty to Ireland. “The church,” he said, “was not made for the ministry or the king, but for the people. It had been thought proper to give the religious establishment of England to the people of Ireland; in which, perhaps, they were right: but they were wrong if they imposed upon the people of Ireland the English church and then made that a reason for disqualifying them from the enjoyment of their rights. Was it to be said that the establishment of the English church was not compatible with the liberties of the people?” On the division, Lord Morpeth’s motion was rejected by a majority of 229 to 135.

The expression of Tory sentiments made by Perceval upon this occasion, instead of precipitating his

dismissal, was followed by the communication before alluded to, which was made through the Duke of York, and at the same time expressed an anxiety that Lords Grey and Grenville should be included in future arrangements. The consequent proposition made to these noblemen was rejected. Disclaiming all personal exclusion, they, however, replied, that their differences of opinion were too great and too important to admit of union; they alluded to the opinions of the present ministers upon the Catholic question, and added, "To recommend to parliament a repeal of the disabilities under which so large a portion of his majesty's subjects still laboured, on account of their religious opinions, would be the first advice which it would be their duty to offer to the prince regent; nor could they, for the shortest time, make themselves responsible for any further delay in the proposal of a measure with which they could entertain no hope of making themselves useful to his royal highness, or to the country."*

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The Whigs being thus impracticable, Perceval found a more congenial ally in Sidmouth, who took office as president of the council, and introduced his party.

Meanwhile Grattan again brought forward the Catholic question, and Canning not only spoke, but

* New Annual Register for 1812.

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In May this administration was destroyed by the assassination of its chief, who was shot by a crazy bankrupt as he entered the lobby of the house of commons. The private worth of this unfortunate statesman neither Whigs nor Tories disputed ; and when it was stated that he had died poor, both parties agreed to grant 2000*l.* a year to his widow, and 50,000*l.* to his children. When, however, the Tories thought this insufficient and proposed an additional pension to his sons, the Whigs resisted the grant as only to be justified by services very different from those which Perceval had performed. The Tories nevertheless persevered and obtained a party triumph. The Tories are a grateful party ; the posthumous rewards obtained by them for Perceval were nearly equal to those with difficulty obtained by the Whigs for Chatham ; yet, what historian will ever place these names together, except for the purpose of strong contrast ? Who now dissents from the judgment passed upon Perceval in the house of lords by his colleague the Marquis of Wellesley ? “ With all my respect for the virtues and excellencies of the late minister,” said that nobleman, “ I still feel it my duty to say that I did not consider him a fit man to lead the councils of this great empire.”

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Upon the death of Perceval, Lord Liverpool was, in the first instance, authorized by the prince regent to form an administration. The earl's first application was to Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning; but these influential men, finding that Lord Castlereagh was to retain the secretaryship for foreign affairs and the lead in the house of commons, and that the Catholic question was still to remain unsettled, refused to treat. When this failure became known, an address was carried by a small majority against ministers, praying the prince regent to appoint an efficient administration. The arrangements were now consigned to the Marquis Wellesley, who undertook to construct a coalition government upon the principles of moderate concession to the Catholics, and the vigorous prosecution of the war in the peninsula. With Wellesley, however, Lord Liverpool and the Tories refused to treat, and Earl Grey and the Whigs were still deliberating, when the commission of the marquis was withdrawn. An attempt to form a cabinet, of which Lords Grey and Grenville should name four members out of twelve, was of course unsuccessful; these noblemen rejecting a compromise which excluded their principles. The marquis expressed in the house of lords his deep regret that the most dreadful personal animosities, the most terrible difficulties, arising out of questions the most complicated and important, should have interposed obstacles to

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prevent that arrangement which was so desirable for the interests and welfare of the country.

It was plain that the prince regent avoided all intimate connexion with his ancient friends, and was unwilling to admit them into any cabinet in which he should not have sufficient power to control their conduct. He afterwards, through Lord Moira, offered them more extensive powers; but refusing to give them power over those great offices of the court which, if occupied by opponents, take from a ministry all character of efficiency and stability; this overture was also declined.*

On the 8th of June Lord Liverpool rose in his place in the house of lords, and stated that he had accepted the appointment of first commissioner of the treasury. The arrangements were soon completed. Eldon, lord chancellor; Harrowby, president of the council; Westmoreland, lord privy seal; Vansittart, chancellor of the exchequer; Melville, first lord of the admiralty; Mulgrave, master-general of the

* It appears, however, that a knowledge of the confidence reposed in Sheridan by the prince regent, and a well-founded distrust of the sincerity of the proposals made to them, had equal effect upon the Whigs. Even the rupture upon the article of the household

appointments was the result of an intrigue set on foot by Sheridan, and of which Lord Moira became the dupe.—See *Moore's Life of Sheridan*—and the Correspondence during these involved negotiations in the *State Papers for 1812*.

ordnance; Sidmouth, home secretary; Castlereagh, foreign secretary; Earl Bathurst, colonial secretary; the Earl of Buckinghamshire, president of the board of control; and the Marquis of Camden, who held no office—these were Lord Liverpool's colleagues in the cabinet. Without, his chief supporters were Lord Palmerston, secretary at war; Mr. Robinson, treasurer of the navy, and Mr. Peel, secretary for Ireland.

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The Perceval administration has been mentioned with regret by the Tories even of the present day, as the last administration formed upon pure Protestant principles. That of Lord Liverpool was formed upon the understanding that the question of Catholic emancipation should be an open question. The effects of this relaxation of ministerial discipline were immediately visible. Scarcely were the ministers appointed when Canning moved a resolution, that the house would, in the next session, take into consideration the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, introducing his motion with one of those brilliant speeches, radiant with all the force and beauty of his early feelings, which always carried captive the minds of his audience when he spoke upon this subject. In the constantly repeated debates upon the Catholic question, others repeated the same ideas, and retrod their old track; but Canning was always original; his fruitful mind appeared to teem with arguments in

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favour of that religious liberty which he now defended. Of him alone can it be said that, upon this long contested question, he never repeated himself. Lord Castlereagh now used his freedom to redeem the pledge he had been the first to give and break ; and upon the division the numbers appeared 255 to 106 in favour of the resolution.

In the following week the same question was introduced into the house of lords by the Marquis Wellesley ; to the horror of Lord Eldon, who said, that, while fighting side by side with that noble marquis he had entertained little suspicion that such opinions as these existed in his mind. Of the cabinet ministers Lords Harrowby, Mulgrave, Camden, and Melville, spoke in favour of the motion ; and Lords Liverpool and Sidmouth against it. The motion was lost by one proxy, the numbers being 126 to 125.

After such an unequivocal recognition of the Catholic claims by the commons, and so very equivocal a refusal of them by the lords, the question might have been considered as decided, as only awaiting the next opportunity for its final arrangement. But a long interval must still elapse before the Catholic could taste the cup which appeared to be almost at his lips. To the session of 1812 succeeded a general election ; and the zeal of the clergy, calling forth the reprimand even of one of their own

bishops, and the exertions of the high Tories, had made the "No popery" cry productive. In the next year, when Grattan introduced a bill granting a comprehensive measure of emancipation, the resolution upon which it was founded was carried in the commons, after a debate of four days, by a majority of but 40. The bill was introduced and passed through the early stages. In the committee, however, the speaker threw all his weight and ability into the scale against it; declared that if that bill passed, the crown itself might become Catholic, and moved the omission of the clause by which Catholics were admitted to parliament. Upon a division he succeeded by a majority of four, and the bill was immediately abandoned.

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Thus did the coveted success vanish from the Catholics as they attempted to clutch it. The brightness of their prospects had proceeded from the dangerous state of Ireland during the supremacy of Napoleon, and the general belief as to the sentiments of the prince regent, rather than from any real progress of liberal principles in the nation. The disastrous issue of the invasion of Russia had destroyed the former motive to conciliation; and more recent observation of the inclinations of the prince had removed the latter. With the moment of danger passed away the idea of concession. The Tories were again strong and intolerant; and the advocates

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of Catholic emancipation became again a small minority in the legislature. While the armies of the allies were marching upon Paris, and were achieving the triumph of Toryism in the restoration of the Bourbons, the popular exultation was too great to allow even a momentary interest to mere domestic questions ; and the great events which ensued, and which were terminated by the battle of Waterloo, sustained the excitement, and fixed it upon external objects.

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The termination of the mighty struggle, which so few of the great men who were flourishing at its commencement had survived to see decided, was indeed glorious to us as a nation ; but even glory may be too dearly bought. In a war commenced, from no dictates of sound policy, but from the mere motive of humouring a Tory king and vindicating a Tory principle, we had spent energies that should have been reserved for some crisis of extreme necessity, and had made efforts which can never be repeated. The success and ambition of Napoleon, which was found so ready and so valuable an excuse for the later periods of this war, can afford none for its commencement, of which they could not be the cause, but were probably the effects.

During this year the nation was deprived of Samuel Whitbread, whose brain reeled beneath the pressure of constant and laborious mental application.

The duties of the house of commons, and the still more ungrateful task of settling the involved accounts of the Drury-lane theatre, overthrew a noble mind. He died by his own hand.

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Early in 1816 Canning joined this administration, as president of the board of control. His motives, as he interpreted them to the people of Liverpool, were, of course, very lofty and disinterested; but when he condescended to place himself again under Castlereagh, he could not but feel himself degraded by his office.

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No sooner was the country returned to a state of peace than those domestic questions which had, for so long, been the objects of very secondary interest, became the chief subjects of popular attention. The Catholic question was re-produced, and although with no immediate success, hopes were again held out that it would be more favourably entertained in the next session. The re-agitation of the subject also produced its effect, in the speech of the Bishop of Norwich, who stood forth from among his brethren to disavow the objection that the emancipation of the Catholics would be the destruction of the church of England: observing that the only way to secure permanently the existence of any establishment, civil or ecclesiastical, was to evince liberal and conciliatory sentiments to those who differed from us, and to lay its foundation in the love, affection, and esteem, of

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all within its influence. This, he said, was the true foundation of our church ; with this it was secure from all danger, without this every other was futile and fallacious.

The first effect of that peace, which had been looked forward to by the younger portion of the nation, as the harbinger of an age of undefined prosperity, was to throw the labouring classes out of employ, and to produce discontent and riot throughout the kingdom. While war stores were in constant consumption, employment abundant, and wages high, the operatives having no time to listen to demagogues, ate their meals in peace ; or, if they thought of politics at all, echoed the “church and king” doctrines of their employers. Even thus low had Pitt’s bribery reached. For five-and-twenty years these men had been earning the purchase-money of their own and their children’s future industry. When this expenditure ceased, and the dreadful scarcity of 1816 pressed, they became hungry and discontented, and were ready to listen to the evils of the system which, as they before thought, worked so well. Choosing to themselves a leader, in the person of Mr. Henry Hunt, whose stentorian voice, farmer-like appearance, and imperturbable powers of face, enabled him to retail, with great effect, the ordinary common-places of hustings oratory, the crowds of unemployed artisans

held meetings, drew up petitions, and passed resolutions ; and as their zeal or their necessities increased, passed from deliberation to action, sacking gunsmiths' shops, and taking possession of different parts of the city.

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The conduct of a prudent party, which had rioted so long in a lavish expenditure, should have been, at this moment of reaction and depression, to reduce the public burdens to the lowest possible scale, and to carry economical reforms into every portion of the state—to foresee that such reforms must be called for, and to avoid the necessity of submitting the inquiry to a hostile party. Had there been, at this time, any leader of the Tory party worthy of the name, perhaps such would have been his policy, although even Pitt might have found some difficulty in calling off the pack from their prey. Castlereagh and Liverpool suspended the Habeas Corpus act, re-enacted and strengthened with the penalty of death similar bills to those which Pitt had called for when the nation was stunned by the noise of the French revolution ; and adopted, generally, every measure of coercion, but none of conciliation. These acts were vehemently opposed by the Whigs, who denied their necessity, and expatiated upon their atrocious cruelty. A low estimation of the value of human life has been remarked to be a certain symptom of despotic tendency in a government. If we are to apply this

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maxim closely, looking at the enactments of the Tories, and their constant advocacy of sanguinary punishments, we should judge the other principles of that party to be fitted rather for the meridian of Constantinople than for that of England. On this occasion the Whigs, headed by Sir Samuel Romilly and Sir James Mackintosh, men whose names will always be illustrious among the friends of liberty and humanity, proposed numberless amendments, and offered a protracted opposition. But the Tories were now in earnest to put down the mobs that were attacking all that rendered office desirable. Canning came forth in great power on the occasion, and their bills passed by large majorities.

Meanwhile the Catholic question made no progress; every year brought its vernal promise and autumnal disappointment; every successive session appeared to give promise of some measure in that which should succeed it; but when this arrived, Mr. Peel in the commons, and Lord Liverpool in the lords, still talked in general terms of the insufficiency of the securities offered, and called upon the members "to weigh the substantial blessings which they know to have been derived from the government that is, against all the speculative advantages which they are promised from the government that is to be." This year the majorities were 24 in the commons, and 52 in the lords;

nor was the question renewed until the meeting of a new parliament in 1819, when the event was the same; the legislature agreeing with Lord Liverpool, who said, he fully subscribed to that system which maintained itself by a protestant religion with a protestant monarchy and a protestant parliament.

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The years 1816 and 1817 made some havoc among the Whig party. On the 7th of July, 1816, death released poor Sheridan from his sufferings. The last days of this illustrious man are disgraceful to the nation whose history he adorns, disgraceful to the Whigs whom he so long and so faithfully served, but still more disgraceful to the heartless and selfish voluptuary to whom he sacrificed every other friendship. Were history altogether silent upon the character of George IV., were the biographer of Sheridan alone admitted to relate his story, we should look upon the deathbed of Sheridan, observe his misery, nay his absolute want, the sheriff's officers surrounding his pillow, and almost contending with death for his prey; we should mark with disgust the prince who owed him so much looking from a distance on his misery, extending to him a paltry pittance in so paltry a manner that it was refused with scorn, and we should admit that George IV. was worthy of all the contempt that has been poured upon his memory.

Sheridan had outlived his political importance,

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but George Ponsonby, who survived him but one day, died while he was nominally at the head of the Whig party. Ponsonby was the second son of a speaker of the Irish house of commons; he had risen from the Irish bar, by the favour of the Whig party to which he faithfully attached himself, to the chancellorship of Ireland. When Lord Howick became Earl Grey, Ponsonby succeeded him for the borough of Tavistock, and was immediately installed as the ostensible Whig leader in the house of commons. He is eminent rather for the office of trust he held than for the talent he manifested. As a statesman, a debater, and an individual, he was a respectable man. He was seized by an apoplectic fit in the house of commons, and died a few days afterwards.*

Early in 1817 died Francis Horner, another valuable member of the Whig party. Horner's parliamentary career had been run at a time when little attention was fixed upon the race, when the peninsula attracted more interest than the houses of parliament. He was brought into parliament by his college friend, Lord Henry Petty. His strength seemed to lie in political economy; it was in the numerous debates which arose out of the report of the bullion commerce that he made the most conspicuous figure. Horner was a good debater, an

* Gentleman's Magazine, vol. lxxxvii., part 2, p. 83.

honest politician, and a consistent Whig. The closeness of his application to his early studies had laid the foundation of a consumption which at length destroyed him.

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In compensation for these losses the party had obtained several new members who could well supply every other loss save that of Sheridan ;—but these are generally the distinguished party champions of the present day, men of whom a contemporary cannot speak with the freedom of history.

The year 1819 witnessed events that, by bringing forth into view the most odious of the characteristics of Toryism, gave some hope of a change in the situation of parties. The large towns which were, under the present system of representation, without representatives, resolved upon the wild experiment of choosing each at a public meeting a legislative attorney who should claim his seat in the house. Sir Charles Wolseley was unanimously chosen for Birmingham ; and a meeting was convened for a similar purpose at Manchester : but the magistrates having denounced the proposed object as illegal, the election was abandoned, and the meeting was summoned avowedly for the legal object of petitioning for parliamentary reform. This meeting took place in an open space in the town, called St. Peter's Field ; the ground was kept by special constables sworn in for the purpose ; Hunt was in the chair, and sixty thousand men and women were assembled

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 A. D. 1817 reform club contributed its company and its banners,
 to 1820. and two companies of women preceded by white silk
 banners led the march. This assembly was not
 more formidable than many others which had been
 recently held, and had dispersed without any breach
 of the peace; but wherever we find liberal princi-
 ples popular and predominant, we may look for a
 nucleus of Toryism, which concentrates all the bitter-
 ness of the party, and compensates for its smallness
 by its intensity.* The authorities of Manchester
 were Tories of this description, eager to do good
 service to the minister on whom they fawned, and to
 wreak their vengeance on the populace whom they
 hated. Scarcely had the proceedings begun when a
 body of yeomanry cavalry appeared charging through
 the crowd and advancing towards the hustings.
 The multitude offered no resistance, they fell back
 on all sides, while men and women, members of the
 clubs, and mere spectators, were stifled in the crush,
 or trampled to death by the horses. Still, however,
 there was no resistance, the troops attained the hust-
 ings, dashed down the flags which hung there, and
 seized the chairman and others who appeared active
 in the business of the meeting. When thus much
 had been accomplished their work appeared done;

* An Irish Tory, for instance, is an English Tory run mad.

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but the people began to hoot. A cry was raised among the yeomanry of "Have at their flags!" and the troop dispersed among the crowd, each man hewing his way with his sabre through the compact and powerless human mass, and spurring towards the banner, he intended to strike down. In ten minutes, four hundred persons, killed, maimed, or wounded, lay upon the ground; the crowd had disappeared, and the soldiers were in possession of the spot they had so chivalrously won.

The people of England heard of this terrible catastrophe with that thrill of indignation which must ever vibrate through a free country at the idea of the slaughter of fellow-citizens by the soldiery; this feeling was not decreased when it was added that the bodies of women and children were found among the slain, and that one woman had received her death-wound from a sabre; but it was not until the party in power had avowed and justified the massacre that the cry for justice or revenge became loud and terrible. The coroner's jury was carefully composed of men who would return verdicts upon which no legal proceedings could be founded. According to their decisions, some of the victims died "an accidental death;" a child died "by a fall from his mother's arms;" and a third victim, "by the pressure of the military, being under the civil power." The exultation of the authorities of the district found vent

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in an address of thanks from the united magistracy of Lancashire and Cheshire to the officers and soldiers engaged, and these Tory squires did not forget especially to remark “the extreme forbearance exercised by the yeomanry when insulted and defied by the rioters.” At Lancaster, the grand jury threw out every bill preferred by the sufferers, and at Manchester depositions against the yeomanry or police officers were altogether refused. The people were cut down by the soldiery, and the courts of justice were closed against their complaints.

Even thus far the Tories of the district were not unsupported by the rulers of their party. The answer to a despatch forwarded to London, contained a letter from Lord Sidmouth, conveying the regent’s high approbation of the exemplary conduct of the officers and men who had assisted and supported the civil power of the county palatine of Lancaster. This formal approval of the slaughter set the country on fire. The Whigs, who had strongly disapproved of the conduct of the democrats, disapproved still more strongly of that of the Tories. The meetings convened throughout the kingdom were no longer composed of mere rabble; men of rank and education headed the movement, and the county of York petitioned under the sanction of one of the lords lieutenant, the Earl Fitzwilliam. The city of London presented a strong remonstrance, which was responded

to by what Earl Grey justly designated as an impertinent and flippant answer; many cities and counties followed the example, while the Tories on the other hand besieged the throne with counter addresses, and were importunate in their offers to form themselves into yeomanry corps, that they might imitate the heroism of their brethren of Manchester, and perhaps attain to equal honours.

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Upon this subject, therefore, the parties were at issue, and it was a question in which blood had already been spilt—wantonly* spilt, and loudly exulted in. The battle of Manchester, as it was called by some of the demagogues, called into being a spirit of fierce hostility between the labouring and the property classes; a spirit of revenge for the slaughter of their kinsmen and companions, a spirit which never should or does exist under a just and free government—which at once exemplified the impracticability of the Tory system, and more than the tongues of an hundred orators, enforced the necessity of reform. Castlereagh attempted to eradicate or repress this settled desire of revenge by penal

* Wantonly, for in no instance did any of the great reform meetings terminate in a breach of the peace, unless the magistracy interfered. It is well that such meetings should know that a military force is near; it is not well that they should be subjected to its attack. The Spafields riots were by no means occasioned by the declamation of Hunt, the hungry and desperate conspirators merely came to this rendezvous to recruit their numbers.

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statutes. Now it was that he introduced and carried those coercive measures which, under the title of "The Six Acts," and "The Gagging Bills," are so celebrated in the speeches and writings of the demagogues of the day; fettering the press with heavy stamps, and onerous securities; introducing the punishment of banishment for libels; empowering the magistracy to disarm the people, and subjecting the homes of Englishmen even to nightly visitations: restricting the exercise of the right of meeting to petition, and contracting, to an alarming extent, that personal liberty which Englishmen are educated to consider as their birthright. These were the measures which persistence in the principles of Tory government rendered almost necessary, and in which the Tories were supported even by the Grenvilles, and were fruitlessly opposed by the Whigs.* The Marquis of Lansdowne and the Whig party refused to surrender the constitution even to avert the consequences of Tory mismanagement; but the timorous property-classes thronged around the minister, and all opposition was vain.

Meanwhile the question of parliamentary reform

* The eloquence of Sir James Mackintosh, whom Fox, in the house of commons, claimed as his friend, and whose *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* has been before noticed, is seen to great advantage in the debates upon these measures. See especially his speech against the Newspaper-tax bill.

was gently agitated. It had found in Lord John Russell an efficient and a persevering advocate. How many great men passed away from the house of commons leaving this question undecided! We now have those in sight who have lived to witness its triumph and enjoy its fruits. Lord John Russell's proposition of reform was exceedingly moderate: it extended no further than to grant facilities for proving bribery against electors; and to transfer the franchise of any borough thus proved to be corrupt to some populous town. From this plan the Whigs could not promise themselves any increase of popularity. "There are," said Lord John Russell, "two parties dividing the country, both greatly exasperated, and both going to extremes; the one making unlimited demands, and the other meeting them with total and peremptory denial: the one ready to encounter any hazard for unknown benefits and imaginary rights; the other ready to sacrifice, for present security, those privileges which our ancestors thought cheaply purchased with their blood." The man who interfered between such combatants could not hope for favour. The Whigs were, accordingly, more detested by the democrats—the radicals, as they were about this time first called—than the Tories. Cobbett, so felicitous in attaching nicknames to his opponents, lampooned them as "shoy-hoys;"* and

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* "The Hampshire word for thievish sparrows, and looking a scarecrow, put up to frighten very formidable at a distance, but

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Canning addressed them as "the mud-bespattered Whigs, who, with laurels in their hats and brickbats at their heels, bedaubed with ribbons and rubbish, were forced to be rescued from their overpowering popularity by a detachment of his majesty's horse-guards."* Each party, bold in their own unbridled principles, agreed to look upon the men who professed the principles of each modified until they could blend in harmony, as a base and truckling faction. Yet the Whigs were not diverted from their steady course. Lord John Russell, in speaking of the apostles of universal suffrage, was not afraid to characterize Major Cartwright as a man who resembled Nestor in nothing but his age, or to laugh at the natural rights of men to meet in their parishes and choose members of parliament by putting white and black beans into a box: even Tierney congratulated the house upon the opportunity afforded of unanimously and decidedly discountenancing the wild and visionary doctrines of reform that had lately agitated the country. The Whig party appears to have been alarmed at the recent demonstrations, and although they retained their characteristic repugnance

soon discovered to be perfectly harmless. The boroughmongers care no more for such men than the sparrow in my neighbour Morrel's garden at Botley, which sat hammering out the peas upon the

crown of the hat of a sham man that had been stuck to frighten the sparrows away." — *Register*, vol. xxxv., p. 22.

* Canning's speech in the debate on the state of the nation.

to repressing the people by the strong arm of power, and preserved their partiality for conciliation and concession, they advanced with great caution, altogether refusing to argue the question of reform upon the principle of reconstruction.

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Castlereagh opposed Lord John Russell's resolutions, but offered a compromise, by engaging to throw no impediment in the way of a bill for the disfranchisement of Grampound, and the transfer of its franchise. The offer was accepted. Lord John Russell withdrew his resolutions and introduced his bill.

The little interest attached to this gradual and partial measure of reform was quickly dissipated. Early in 1820 George III. died, and although the change of title of the reigning prince, from that of regent to that of king, appeared at first to be the only consequence of this event, yet, that change brought in its train other questions which gave full occupation to the parties, and excitement to the nation.

CHAPTER XX.

Thistlewood's conspiracy—The queen's trial—Unpopularity of the Tories—Efforts of the Whigs to undermine their power—Education—Hume's motions—Progress of the Catholic question—Mr. Plunkett's bill passes the commons—Canning's bill—State of Ireland—Death of Lord Londonderry—Accession of Canning to the ministry—Its effect upon the Catholic question—Cabinet changes of 1823—Irish Catholic Association—Burdett's Catholic bill of 1825—Rejected by the lords—Question of parliamentary reform—Mr. Lambton's motion of 1821—Lord John Russell's—Lord John Russell's motion of 1822—Petitions in its favour—Canning's speech against it—State of the question in 1826—General election of 1826—Illness and retirement of Lord Liverpool—The new house of commons decide against the Catholics—Formation of the Canning administration—Secession of the high Tories—Canning is supported by the Whigs—Death of Canning—Appointment of Lord Goderich as his successor—Resignation of Lord Goderich.

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If example were wanting of the ferocious spirit of hostility to the higher classes which pervaded the populace, since the slaughter at Manchester, it would be abundantly found in the desperate conspiracy headed by Thistlewood, which was discovered and suppressed early in this year. Such a number of men could not be gathered for such a purpose ; nor

could the secret have been kept even so well as it was, unless the band of union had been the strong and bitter hatred only engendered by oppression. The cheer with which the rabble met the prisoners when they appeared on the scaffold and expressed their sorrow only that they had failed to revenge the Manchester massacre, showed that the feeling whence this conspiracy sprung was widely diffused. The midnight training in Yorkshire, the rising at Huddersfield, and the riots at Paisley and Glasgow, showed that it was not confined to the metropolis.

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While the king and his government were thus the objects of popular hatred, the Princess of Wales, now the Queen of England, returned to the capital, and claimed to share her husband's throne. This high-spirited woman was very unfit to be the wife of George IV. She could not tutor her spirit to acquiesce with humble fidelity, while her husband ran his course of shameless and undisguised debauchery. Irritated with his infidelity, and, if the anecdotes of the day have any truth, disgusted with himself, she did not disguise her sentiments. Before she left England for the continent, the prince had declared his fixed determination never again to meet her either in public or in private. Cast off by her husband, and left to roam the continent at her will, it had been wonderful indeed if her conduct had been, in every instance, correct; but it had been still more wonder-

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ful if slander had allowed it to be so reported. Spies were placed upon her actions ; her most confidential servants were in the pay of her husband, and every act was known in England through the interested report of her own menials. Such a mass of crimination had been thus accumulated that the king thought it out of the question that she should ever return to England ; and took no steps to relieve her from the distresses and indignities to which she was subjected abroad. Her bold resolution to confront her enemies, confounded him. All negotiation was fruitless ; he was compelled to assert his dishonour before the world, and to adduce his proof. In support of Lord Liverpool's bill of pains and penalties, this proof was given at the bar of the house of lords. She stood the trial dauntlessly, while the king himself shook beneath the terrific denunciations which were poured upon him by her counsel. The infamous hirelings who had watched Caroline's conduct, and now testified to her guilt, were, upon cross examination, so utterly destroyed as to their credit, that no honest jury could receive their evidence. The majorities upon the bill continually decreased, until, upon the third reading, it amounted only to nine. Another question remained to be put—the house of commons had yet to be encountered—nine cabinet ministers were in the minority. The bill was abandoned. The king had thus succeeded in conveying to all the reasoning part of his subjects, a moral conviction of

his wife's guilt, while he failed to obtain any release from the tie which bound him to her.

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But the principal feature of this contest was the universal popularity of the queen. From the instant of her arrival in England she became the rallying-point for the disaffected. Her cause was one which would lend an air of chivalry to the hatred with which the recollections of Manchester, and the tyranny of Castlereagh, had inspired the people. In her they saw a victim to the same king and the same party who had protected the murderers of their friends. They knew that, even if guilty, she was less guilty than her prosecutor—they saw her friendless and persecuted, and they espoused her cause with enthusiasm. Addresses, expressive of absolute confidence in her innocence, and of vehement indignation at the unmanly conduct of her oppressors, encumbered her by their numbers; and so widely did the feeling spread, that the counter addresses which were presented to the king, scarcely ventured to approve his conduct, but dwelt chiefly upon the violence of hers. The Whigs, headed, upon this occasion, by Brougham and Denman, the queen's principal counsel, led the people. Had the house of commons been less absolutely dependent upon the proprietors of boroughs, had it been one degree less the property of its shareholders, the Tory ministry could not have stood before the storm. But the circumstances of this trial are only appropriate to our subject as they exemplify

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the disaffected state of the nation under this Tory government.

One noble means by which the Whigs undertook to restore the democratic principle to the government, was the general diffusion of education. A party depending for its existence upon popular support, could not be too anxious for the enlightenment of the people—they could not be too diligent in preparing them for the comprehension of the arguments they addressed to them—in conferring upon them that knowledge which is power. In this department laboured Henry Brougham : a man whose prodigious talents and unwearied industry, whose multitudinous acquirements, indomitable perseverance, and enlightened philanthropy, rendered him worthy to be the apostle of the new creed of universal education. At first he was feebly supported and fiercely opposed. Many Whigs thought his views chimerical—all Tories thought he was demoralizing the people. Still he pressed on, and light remained upon the track he had trod. Alarmed at his progress, the Tories (although such arguments are still heard in private) no longer talked publicly of the danger of education to the people. They attempted to rival the course they could not stop. The National Society sprang into being—schools multiplied, and education spread. But while the Tories were obliged to follow the movement, they execrated its author. His design had been to spread education among every class, among the followers of

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every creed ; to treat it as an affair utterly distinct from religion, and to remove it from the custody of those who had carefully confined it within the pale of the church. Their maxim had always appeared to be, “ Ignorance or orthodoxy ;” his was, “ Universal education.” Mr. Brougham objected to the admixture of religion in a national plan of education, because it must render the operation of that plan partial instead of universal. He would teach the children of the poor to read and write, and leave their religious instruction to their parents : he would teach men to think and reason, but leave to them the choice of subjects upon which they should exercise their powers. The Tories have always looked upon education as an instrument of proselytism in the hands of the establishment. They thought the church in danger from the new theories of education, and instituted schools in which it was rendered subservient to the dissemination of the doctrines of the church of England. Thus, from the opposition of the parties arose an important public good ; and while the *Edinburgh and Quarterly* Reviews*, the organs of their several parties, were exchanging the epithets, “ bigot” and “ infidel,” the general cause was advancing, and the public attention was fixed upon the subject.

* The article in No. 38 of the *Quarterly Review* must not, however, be received as genuine Toryism, for it was written by Canning.

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But the labourers were still far from equal to the extent of the vineyard. In 1816 the metropolis alone contained 120,000 children destitute of the means of education, a promising mass of ignorance to act as an incubus upon the advance of civilization among their contemporaries. Brougham now obtained a parliamentary committee, which laid open instances of entire misappropriation and bold embezzlement of educational funds, such as no man could have imagined who had heard the declamation of the Tories upon the sacredness of such institutions, and upon their vital importance to the prosperity of the church. He carried through, against every opposition,* a bill for a commission of inquiry into the abuses of public charities; but his discoveries had already been too embarrassing, and the minister preferred the odium of excluding him from the commission he had originated, to the exposures which must infallibly follow his appointment. Still, however, the subject never slumbered in Brougham's active mind; through the press from his place in parliament, through the *Edinburgh Review*, by popular and

* "Under the flimsy pretence," said Mr. Brougham, "of great tenderness for the sacred rights of property, I am well aware that the authors of this outcry conceal their own dread of being themselves dragged to light as robbers of the

poor; and I will tell those shameless persons that the doctrine they promulge of charitable funds in a trustee's hands being private property, is utterly repugnant to the whole law of England."

widely-read pamphlets, the object was kept before the country. Without abandoning for a moment the education of children, he comprised in his endeavours the improvement of adults ; he resuscitated an idea, which owed its origin to Dr. Birkbeck so long ago as the year 1800, of forming classes of labouring mechanics, and lecturing them in the rudiments of natural philosophy and mathematics. Societies, under the title of “ Mechanics’ Institutes,” were formed, libraries were collected, laboratories procured, professors appointed, and cheap publications on scientific subjects were published and found extensive sale. The Tories saw the change with alarm ; and their oracles, unable openly to denounce the abandonment of sensual for mental enjoyment, turned their violence upon the author of the change. Party abuse, unless it degenerates to private calumny, seldom injures any man. Brougham appeared to luxuriate in it. His powers of ready eloquence, fierce invective, and withering sarcasm, left him nothing to fear from an opponent. When the barking of the pack which has so long surrounded him is forgotten, and a future generation comes to analyze and compare the powers of mind of those who have preceded them, Brougham will probably be placed at the head of contemporary statesmen ; he will certainly be regarded with admiration, as the leader of the little band of pioneers who first entered the forest

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and cleared a space through which the sunbeams, that had hitherto rested upon the topmost branches, descended to dissipate the darkness that reigned below.

While Brougham was teaching his countrymen to reason, Mr. Hume was diligently supplying them data. The necessity of covering corruption and concealing extravagance had led to a designed confusion of the national accounts. Items of expenditure could never be obtained, totals only were brought forward, and these were communicative of little more than the extent of the ministers demand. Perhaps there was not another man in England, except Mr. Hume, who could have reduced these accounts to an intelligible state. Gifted with no extraordinary talent, although a shrewd and sensible speaker yet by no means an orator, he discovered nevertheless an imperturbable perseverance, an indifference to defeat, a disregard, appearing like unconsciousness, of the invective by which he was assailed, and of the wit by which he was ridiculed. Equally undisturbed by the jeers of Canning, the indignation of Huskisson, and the majorities of Castlereagh, he was nightly at his post calling for explanations, and demanding returns. Whenever his importunity was successful—to perseverance like his, all things are possible—and he was admitted to inspect the details of a suspicious item, he almost invariably discovered the grub, around which the mysterious web had been woven, in the

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shape of a sinecure, a pension, or something equally desirous of concealment ; and picking it out and holding it up to the house of commons he passed on to the next. At first the house laughed, and the public echoed the laugh ; but at length the affair became serious, the examples became numerous—an impression was made—the agriculturists who felt present distress were inclined to listen to tales of extravagance—in the debate upon Mr. Curwen's motion for a repeal of the agricultural horse-tax, Mr. Hume's laborious exertions became the subject of praise instead of ridicule, and Castlereagh, after a vehement opposition to the motion, was left in a minority. These successes afterwards became frequent, Castlereagh was beaten upon many minor subjects of economical reforms, and he at last was compelled to form a compact with Mr. Hume, by which he granted him all the returns he immediately wanted.

These unintermitted and wearying motions were far more formidable to the ministry than those which involved general principles of government. Of these the Catholic question appeared to be advancing. Early in the session of 1821, Mr. Plunket introduced a bill by which the Catholics were proposed to be admitted to all offices except the lord chancellorship and the lord lieutenancy of Ireland. After protracted debates, in which the balance of eloquence may be readily assigned to the liberal party, since

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Peel was the only Tory orator of note, and Plunket, Mackintosh, Wilberforce, and Canning, were his opponents, the second reading was carried by a majority of 11. This bill ultimately passed the house—a considerable step in the progress of the question. In the lords it met with less success, and being opposed by the Earl of Liverpool, Lord Colchester, the chancellor—but above all, by the Duke of York, it was thrown out by a majority of 39.

The failure of this bill was succeeded by an attempt at legislation made by Mr. Canning, who proposed that the Catholic peers should be restored to their places in the house of lords. This was opposed by Mr. Peel, and still more vehemently by Mr. Wetherell, an eccentric speaker, who admirably represented the real Tory party in the commons, as Eldon represented it in the lords. It passed the commons by a small majority, but was lost in the house of lords.

Peel opposed this bill as home secretary; an office which he held in consequence of the ministerial arrangements made at the commencement of the year. By these arrangements the Grenvilles, abandoning the only distinctive principle which divided them from their brother Tories, consented to join a cabinet which contemplated no concession to Ireland. Lord Grenville, indeed, retired from public life, but the Marquis of Buckingham was

created a duke, and his immediate followers were provided for. One being made president of the board of control, and another receiving minor appointments to the amount of 4000*l.* a year. By this arrangement the Tory ministry gained but little, either in interest, popularity, or talent; a few votes in the house of commons secured, a few loud-tongued agricultural members silenced, and the name of a noble family detached from opposition, constituted all their advantage. Mr. Peel's advancement was brought by no such dereliction of principle. Lord Sidmouth resigned, retiring altogether from official duties, but retaining his seat in the cabinet. Peel was his successor. "This gentleman's political predilections, sympathies, principles, and prejudices," says a writer in the *Annual Register*,* "were very much the same with those of Lord Sidmouth; so that the substitution of the one for the other could have no effect in the course of administration." Mr. Peel certainly appeared at this time worthy the friendship of Sidmouth, Eldon, Liverpool,

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* In 1821 we lose the *Annual Register*, which has been so long our companion, and which must form the foundation of every history of the period it comprehends. The grave and temperate tone of the historical articles of

the *Annual Register* is worthy of a work which could count Edmund Burke among its contributors. The continuation is a syllabub of frothy and flippant Toryism.

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Wetherell, and the other magnates of high Toryism ; but he wanted the dogged and impracticable obstinacy which that class seemed to have caught, by contact, from George III. Even while he fought with his party against all concession, there is reason to think that he believed the time to be near at hand, if not present, when the point in dispute should be conceded.*

The Marquis of Wellesley was now lord lieutenant of Ireland where he was sincerely hated by the Orangemen for discouraging their ferocious toasts, and for discountenancing the party processions by which they taunted the Catholic majority with their subserviency. He was little more popular with the Catholics when they found that he, in common with the other Tories who were pledged to the

* Since this was in print I have seen the following passage, in an article upon the state of parties, in the *Edinburgh Review* :

"In 1827 Sir R. Peel told Mr. Canning and the house of commons, that his unlooked for opposition to the administration of which Mr. Canning was the premier, was grounded solely on the effect which Mr. Canning's well-known operations in favour of Roman Catholic relief must have

in his new position. Yet, at that very moment, Sir Robert had in his writing-desk the letter which he had himself addressed two years before to Lord Liverpool ; having stated therein that in his opinion the time was come when the measure of Catholic relief ought to be conceded, and having proposed that he should retire from office while it was carrying through." — *Edinburgh Review*, No. cxxxii., p. 281.

question, had taken office without any stipulation in their favour. That unhappy country was still the scene of continual outrage, the Protestants there were enraged tyrants; the Catholics were exasperated rebels. Where the arm of the law could be felt it was the instrument of vengeance upon the Catholic; where it was not feared, opportunities were seldom neglected of inflicting a fearful retaliation upon the Protestant. Canning's fragment of legislation was intended as his last brilliant display previous to leaving England for India, whither he was about to proceed as governor-general, having been excluded from the cabinet on account of his refusal to join in the prosecution of the queen. While he was yet preparing for his departure the suicide of Lord Londonderry occasioned an important breach in the cabinet, and, notwithstanding the disinclination of the king, and the objections of Eldon, it was felt that he alone could fill it. Canning became foreign secretary.

The administration thus formed, although containing so strong a party in favour of the Catholic claims was their most strenuous opponent. It was soon noticed that Canning, and Plunket, now attorney-general for Ireland, were less earnest in the cause. Their conduct was severely arraigned in the commons. Brougham designating that of Canning as the most incredible specimen of monstrous truckling for the purpose of obtaining office, that the whole his-

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tory of political tergiversation could furnish.* This was partially true : the influence of the lord' chancellor was greater than any coadjutor who differed from him should have borne ; the high Tory peers looked upon him as the real minister ;† and confiding in his protection threw out some bills granting a trivial indulgence to English Catholics, which had passed the commons with the approbation even of Peel, and which in the lords had the support even of Liverpool.

In 1823 some further change occurred in the cabinet, Mr. Vansittart being raised to the house of lords as Lord Bexley, was succeeded by Mr. Robinson, and Huskisson became president of the board of trade. The latter gentleman was of no great importance as a party man. Although an adherent of Canning, and favourable to the Catholics, he only once spoke in favour of their claims. Huskisson's

* Canning exclaimed, " That is false !" and a scene ensued, which ended according to the approved fashion of house of commons quarrels.

† Posterity will probably pass a severe judgment upon the memory of this statesman. Ministers who would have aided Castlereagh in his violence and tyranny, have existed before Eldon ; but I believe there is no other instance

of a man who was possessed of nearly absolute influence in the councils of a nation for a quarter of a century, and of whom it can be said, that he never originated one measure that the next generation judged to be beneficial to his country, and never allowed one such measure to be discussed without his strenuous and generally fatal opposition.

value was as a political economist. Finance, currency, and commerce, were the departments in which he stood unrivalled. Canning truly described him as the best practical man of business in England.

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The Catholics ceased not to cry from their bondage, but their friends among the Tories had ceased to listen, and the Whigs thought the annual debate a mere farce; never intended to have any serious event. Deserted by their former advocates, the Irish now began to threaten; the Catholic Association under the guidance of Daniel O'Connell—one of those commanding spirits which come forth when a national crisis calls, had assumed an almost parliamentary form. Enjoying the full confidence of their countrymen, this assembly ordered a census, levied taxes, and assumed to themselves in every respect the representation of the wrongs and wishes of Catholic Ireland.

The session of 1825 commenced with an attempt to put down this dangerous Association. In support of the bill brought in for this purpose, the cabinet were unanimous. Canning, Plunket, Peel, Goulburn, were all consentient in its praise. Brougham, Tierney, Mackintosh, supported by a troop of Whigs, many of whom were now first rising into notice, pointed to emancipation as the true Suppression bill, and prolonged the debate during four nights. The bill, when passed, was laughed at

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Sir Francis Burdett brought forward the question of emancipation, and introduced a bill which passed the commons by a majority of 21, and was rejected by the lords by a majority of 48.

Upon this occasion the Duke of York delivered that memorable declaration which the Tories printed in gilt letters, and hung up in their libraries. They now exulted in the conviction that the conscientious scruples of the heir presumptive would rival those of his father.

The question was not again agitated in this parliament, which having completed its sixth session was dissolved on the 2d of June, 1826.

In the parliament now dissolved we see considerable advance made towards the settlement of the Catholic claims. The Whigs but feebly assisted by the people, who were generally either apathetic or hostile, joined by a portion of the Tories whom their more influential companions disavowed, had forced a full measure of emancipation twice through the house of commons. Let us now turn to the question of parliamentary reform.

In 1821 two motions were made upon this subject. The first by Mr. Lambton, member for Durham, a man of great energy, talent, and honesty of pur-

pose, and one whose large property exempted him from all suspicion of wishing the destruction of the institutions he proposed to reform. Mr. Lambton proposed to divide the borough representation equally among the householders of the kingdom, to extend the county suffrage to copyholders and leaseholders, and to render parliaments triennial. The second, made by Lord John Russell, was the moderate measure of reform proposed by the Whigs. Both were rejected. Mr. Lambton's in a house containing only 98 members, and Lord John Russell's in a house of 279. Grampound was, however, this year disfranchised against the strong opposition of the chancellor and of Lord Lauderdale, who now came forward to recant all his former declarations in favour of parliamentary reform.

In the following year Lord John Russell's annual motion was preceded by numerous petitions in its favour from all parts of the country, and was introduced by a most elaborate speech, in which, from statistical tables, his lordship demonstrated a progress in the state and condition of the people in one direction, and a change in the state of the house of an opposite tendency. The awakening intelligence of the lower classes he evinced by the increased numbers and circulation of newspapers. In the year 1782, seventy-nine newspapers were published throughout the British dominions; in 1821 that number was

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become 284. The tendency of the house of commons he exemplified from an analysis of divisions. Taking a question of economical reduction, he showed that, of the members for places having less than five hundred electors, nineteen opposed and one supported the reduction ; while, of the members for counties and large towns, sixty-nine supported and thirty-four opposed it. Canning, whose brilliant speeches at Liverpool against parliamentary reform had called forth universal admiration, now came forward to dazzle its advocates in parliament, and, contemplating an immediate departure for India, to leave behind him a speech upon the subject which should be remembered. The close of this elegant piece of oratory appeared to betray that Canning foresaw the ultimate triumph of the question he was then opposing. “ That the noble lord will carry his motion this evening I have no fear ; but, with the talents he has shown himself to possess, and with, I sincerely hope, a long and brilliant career of parliamentary distinction before him, he will, no doubt, renew his efforts hereafter. Although I presume not to expect that he will give any weight to observations or warnings of mine, yet, on this, probably the last opportunity which I shall have of raising my voice on the question of parliamentary reform, while I conjure the house to pause before it consents to adopt the proposition of the noble lord, I cannot help conjuring the

noble lord himself to pause before he again presses it upon the country. If, however, he shall persevere, and if his perseverance shall be successful, and if the results of that success shall be such as I cannot help apprehending—his be the triumph to have precipitated those results, be mine the consolation that to the utmost and to the latest of my power I have opposed them.”

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The minority upon this occasion numbered 164.

In the following year they reached 169, and were fortified by a petition from Yorkshire, signed by 17,083 freeholders, upwards of two-thirds of the whole number in the county. The interest excited by the more dubious divisions upon the Catholic bill now caused some abatement in the cry for parliamentary reform. In 1826, when it was again brought forward, the house was less full, and the reformers present were only 123.

Still, however the cause of Whiggism had made some progress. Lord John Russell had rescued the great question from the hands of the Cobbetts, the Burdetts, and the Hunts; under his protection it became an object which moderate men would stop to regard, and which excited neither ridicule nor horror. It was no slight advantage that it had assumed a temperate form, and had become the subject of serious argument. Converts to the principle were continually coming over, and among them the Whigs ob-

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served, with pleasure, many scions of noble families ; nor was it an evil sign that the people appeared, although equally resolved, to be more moderate ; that they appeared to look up to the Whigs for guidance, and sometimes refused to listen to the wild schemes of representation, and infamous projects for plundering the national creditor, which were put forth by Cobbett and his crew.

The general election accomplished but little for the Whigs. Their efforts in favour of the Catholics formed a powerful topic against them. In large towns the self-elected corporation, filled exclusively with Tories, formed a little Tory citadel. In the counties the ignorant constituency blindly obeyed their landlords. Thus, at Liverpool, the return of a Whig was hopeless ; and Brougham had no chance in Westmorland against the influence of the Lowthers. In the rural districts, and in remote boroughs, the “No popery” cry had great success ; while in the more populous and educated constituencies, Catholic concession excited but little enthusiasm. The people had too much to demand for themselves to bestow much advocacy upon the claims of others. The subject was never very popular, and they appeared rather to *consent* to Catholic emancipation in return for the support they received from Ireland in favour of parliamentary reform. It is the Whig party, not the people, the leaders, not the followers, who had

always laboured to obtain a free government for Ireland.

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Early in 1827 the Duke of York died. Soon after, a fit of paralysis deprived the cabinet of its head; thus removing two of the most powerful opponents of the Catholic claims, two of the most sturdy assertors of genuine Toryism. Under these circumstances Sir Francis Burdett brought forward the Catholic claims, with considerable expectations of success. In addition to the usual speakers upon this question, Mr. Spring Rice, who had been rapidly rising into notice with the Whig party, appeared conspicuous on the liberal side; and Sir John Copley, the master of the rolls, brought forth all his talent to aid the Tories. The latter, however, who seemed to have assumed the tone of the Earl of Eldon, was completely demolished by the raillery of Canning, who held him up most mercilessly to the laughter of the house.* Peel, although expecting to be left in a minority, and to see a cabinet formed by Canning, upon the principle of concession to Ireland, showed no sign of yielding. "I have stated," he said in conclusion of his speech, "the principles which my reason dictates, and which honour and conscience compel me to maintain. The influence of some great

* Sir John winced under the cians. It was not, however, infliction, and a twenty-four their interest to be enemies, so hours' intermission of friendship only one sun went down upon took place between the politi- their wrath.

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names, of some great men, has lately been lost to the cause I support ; but I never adopted my opinions upon it from deference either to high station or to high ability. Keen as the feelings of regret must be with which the loss of these associates is recollected, it is still a matter of consolation to me, that, in the absence of these individuals, I have now an opportunity of showing my adherence to those tenets which I formerly espoused ; of showing, that, if my tenets be unpopular, I stand by them still when the influence and authority that may have given them currency is gone."

Mr. Peel was mistaken in his anticipations of evil. Notwithstanding the loss of the Duke of York and of Lord Liverpool, the high Tories were still so strong, that Sir Francis Burdett's resolution was rejected by a majority of two—276 to 274.

The arrangements which the incapacity of Lord Liverpool rendered necessary, now absorbed the public attention. Canning had caught a severe cold by attending the funeral of the Duke of York, his health had been since very precarious, and his exertions upon the Catholic question had produced a relapse and occasioned some further delay. When the sentiments of the divided cabinet, as to their future chief came to be gathered, it was found that the Duke of Wellington, Lord Eldon, and Mr. Peel, the chiefs of the anti-catholic party, had resolved not to act under a minister favourable to the Catho-

lie claims. Mr. Canning, upon learning this determination, was equally resolved not to admit that the advocacy of those claims could disqualify a man for the station of minister. Since a division was unavoidable, and the Wellington and Peel party confessed their inability to form a cabinet without the assistance of their late colleague, Canning, who was designated alike by the national voice, and the favour of the king, became Lord Liverpool's successor; the king at the same time telling him that he would himself oppose any attempt at Catholic emancipation.

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No sooner was this appointment made than the late cabinet fell to pieces like a toy house of cards.* The Duke of Wellington, Mr. Peel, Lords Eldon, Bathurst, Melville, and Bexley, sent in their resignations. They were followed by all those of the

* "On the 12th of April," said the London Magazine, "being the day before Good Friday, seven cabinet ministers struck work simultaneously, like so many journeymen tailors, in consequence of the appointment of Mr. Canning to the premiership. One of them, Lord Bexley, has since become a '*dung*,' and returned to his work, or rather to his idleness; for he enjoys a snug sinecure, which nothing but an access of extraordinary fury could induce so pious a man to tempt

Providence by relinquishing. The rest continue '*flints*.'

"*Musa mihi causas memora*.—What could have tempted seven ministers, grave, reputable people—four of the seven certainly as little suspected of any exuberance of fancy or understanding as any men in the king's dominions; people far too stupid, it was supposed, even for a freak like this—what could have tempted them to throw their bread upon the waters in the hope of seeing it again after many days?"

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high Tory party who loved Toryism better than place. Sir Charles Wetherell, whose sincerity has never been questioned; threw up the attorney-generalship, and the Marquis of Londonderry ceased to be a lord of the bedchamber. Many other subordinates retired, but Lord Bexley retracted his resignation.

Among those who remained, were Mr. Huskisson, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Wynn, all of whom belonged to Canning's school of Toryism; the vacancies were filled up by the appointment of Sir John Copley as lord chancellor, now created Lord Lyndhurst; Mr. Sturges Bourne, home secretary; Mr. Robinson, created Lord Goderich, colonial secretary; Lord Dudley, foreign secretary; the Duke of Portland, privy seal; Mr. Canning retaining the offices of first lord of the treasury and chancellor of the exchequer. Lord Melville's resignation was followed by the popular appointment of the liberal Duke of Clarence to be lord high admiral.

It may well be asked, why the Tory party, upon this occasion, deserted Canning? In the explanations which ensued, Mr. Peel spoke of his opinions upon the Catholic question; but surely with no great success, since the house could not but remember that Sir John Copley, whose speech upon that question was yet ringing in their ears, was now seated upon the woolsack which Eldon had vacated. Mr. Peel also was doubtless aware of the king's protest

against Catholic concession being made a cabinet question, and we who can recur to his after conduct cannot avoid some scepticism as to the intensity of his horror of popery. But, admitting Mr. Peel's justification, what shall we say to Lord Melville and the Marquis of Londonderry, who voted with Mr. Canning upon the Catholic question? Does not their retirement with the Wellington and Peel party, show that other considerations than those connected with the Catholic question prompted the party to abandon Canning? If the real reason was personal jealousy in some and aristocratic pride in others, it was a motive contemptible in some and absurd in others. The most able of the seceders was doubtless Mr. Peel, yet he would be a very injudicious friend who should attempt to draw a comparison between him and Canning. Jealousy in Mr. Peel of Canning had been as absurd as aristocratic pride in the Duke of Wellington* had been contemptible. Yet while, remembering the disavowal of such motives, we admit that such was not the inducement which led these

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* The Duke of Wellington in order to be appointed to a station to the duties of which I was forcibly denied that he had ever aspired to the office of minister unaccustomed, in which I was not himself. Alluding to his appointment as commander-in-chief, and wished, and for which I was not to its congenial duties, he said, qualified? My lords, I should have been worse than mad if I had "Does any man believe that I thought of such a thing."—*Debates, N. S.*, vol. xvii., col. 461.

CHAP. influential men to abandon their illustrious friend, we
 XX. look at the circumstances which accompanied and
 A. D. 1820 followed the transaction, and find ourselves unable to
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The Whigs, who saw in the hostility of the Tories some hope of liberal measures, and who agreed with Canning upon the subjects of Catholic emancipation, foreign policy, and commercial regulation, extended to him their support. A close and immediate coalition was not advisable, nor perhaps practicable; but Mr. Scarlett, an active member of that party, became attorney-general, and an arrangement was entered into by which Lord Lansdowne, Lord Carlisle, and Mr. Tierney, were to have seats in the cabinet at the end of the session.*

The appearance of the opposition soon showed the homely materials of which the substance of the Tory party was composed. Lord Londonderry, in a burst of indignant eloquence, exclaimed, "When I look at the building which has been erected, I find it divested of all its main pillars, and it is composed now of a sort of rubbish. The artificer has certainly been dexterous in forming the building with respect to its durability. Could he have found out such a mass of rubbish in any other quarter, formed as it was by the two parties? The artificer has made a

* Stapleton's Political Life of Canning.

dexterous endeavour to unwhig a part of the Whigs, and untory a part of the Tories." Some of this nobleman's late colleagues objected to the contemptuous term "rubbish," by which, in the pride of superior intellect, he designated them; but the marquis explained that he alluded only to the new members of the cabinet, and Lord King cruelly suggested that the rubbish is that which is *sent away* from the building. The Duke of Newcastle thought Mr. Canning "the most profligate minister that ever was in power," and his retainers in the house of commons did not fail to reiterate the opinion. In his enfeebled state of health the constant recurrence of even the most contemptible attacks would be wearying: he could, indeed, call to his assistance the searing eloquence of Brougham, and he could tell his accusers with an easy indifference that he had had to endure the assaults of the opposition benches when filled with other persons of a quality which he was not likely soon again to experience;* yet constant labour and continual harassing increased his disease. He was employing himself† in gathering

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* During the progress of the session, Lord Lansdowne took his seat in the cabinet. Lord Carlisle was made first commissioner of woods and forests, and Mr. Tierney, master of the mint; and at the close, Lord Lansdowne became home secretary, and Lord Carlisle, privy seal.

† Life of Canning, vol. ii., p. 434.

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information for an extensive economical reform when he was seized with the illness which became so rapidly fatal. Canning died on the 8th of August. He reached the pinnacle of his ambition, and expired—perhaps happily for his fame; for the restrictions by which he was bound were so galling, the state of parties so involved, the support he received so equivocal, and the opposition which threatened him so determined, that no fair opportunity was afforded him for the development of the liberality of his views of government, or for the unfettered exercise of his extraordinary genius. Standing between the two parties, and differing more essentially from that which gave him a disinterested support, than from that which pursued him with unrelenting hostility, he must probably have fallen a prey to the cannibal pursuit of his own party, or have forfeited his consistency by a thorough coalition with the Whigs.

The Whig party were wise and politic in tendering to Canning their support in parliament. As Canning himself admitted in the house of commons, the circumstance of the prime minister being an avowed advocate of Catholic emancipation gave a moral support to that question which in its present position ensured its success. How far the Whigs were justified in taking office under a man who was pledged to oppose all parliamentary reform, and

avowed his intention of upholding the Test act, is a more dubious question. It was differently answered by Earl Grey and Mr. Tierney; and will be differently resolved by all those who differ as to the right of a statesman to make a temporary sacrifice of principle to expediency.

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Lord Goderich attempted to supply the place of Canning as first lord of the treasury: and the chancellorship of the exchequer having been refused by Tierney, Huskisson, and Sturges Bourne, who wished that Lord Althorp should take it, was at last conferred upon Mr. Herries, who had been secretary of the treasury under Lord Liverpool, and was a Tory of that school. It very soon appeared that Lord Goderich, although a man of respectable ability, was unequal to the baton of Canning. The spirits that had bowed before his genius, rose in rebellion against the interference of his feeble successor.* The Whigs, who wished to strengthen the ministry with the high reputation and the solid abilities of Lord Althorp, and Mr. Herries who had as strong a repugnance to that nobleman's views,

* "—— Celsa sedet Æolus arce,
Sceptra tenens; mollitque animos
et temperat iras,"

is a quotation made by Canning in reference to England. It is not less applicable to himself.

Nothing but the ascendancy of such a superior mind could hope to restrain the discordant elements he had cooped together in the cabinet.

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were soon at open strife, each applying to Lord Goderich and each threatening to resign. The premier distracted between their rival applications, and oppressed by domestic sorrows, took the step which his colleagues threatened. On the 8th of January, 1828, he resigned his office.

CHAPTER XXI

Formation of the Wellington administration—Beaten by the Whigs upon the question of the Test Acts repeal—Debates upon the repeal—Catholic question—State of Ireland—Emancipation bill brought forward by the Duke of Wellington—Rage of the Tories when they find themselves betrayed—Debates upon the bill—In the commons—In the lords—Catholic bill passed—Resentment and opposition of the Tories—Generosity of the Whigs, who support the Duke of Wellington against his own party.

UPON the resignation of Lord Goderich the king immediately confided the formation of a new ministry to the Duke of Wellington ; and the duke, forgetting or repenting the public declaration he had made a few months before, readily accepted the commission. The Whigs beheld the appointment with the utmost dismay. Although no one of the party doubted that the duke was actuated by the most honest—by the

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most patriotic motives; yet, there was none who did not anticipate danger from his elevation. They saw in him an iron-minded soldier, accustomed to hold in utter scorn the opinions of the multitude; habituated to form his decisions in his own mind, and to act upon them with rapidity and promptitude. They did not doubt that he sincerely believed that the creed of the high Tories was the belief of patriots; but they feared that he would attempt to use a soldier's argument to propagate his creed, and govern England as he would rule a camp. Their alarm was not lessened when they saw him re-enter the cabinet surrounded by all those veteran Tories who had admired Lord Castlereagh, and idolized Lord Liverpool; and they derived no great consolation even from the fact that Huskisson and Lord Palmerston were suffered to remain. Lord Caernarvon prophesied a return to the policy of Castlereagh, and anticipated "green bags again upon their table, and red coats at the next popular meeting."* Brougham, however, ridiculed such fears, and defied the soldier. He thought the appointment of the Duke of Wellington was bad in a constitutional point of view; but as to any violence being, in consequence, directed against the liberties of the country, the fear of such an event he looked upon as futile

* In allusion to the queen's trial. The papers were laid upon the table in a sealed green bag.

and groundless. "These," said he, "are not the times for such an attempt. There have been periods when the country heard with dismay that 'the soldier was abroad.' That is not the case now. Let the soldier be ever so much abroad, in the present age, he can do nothing. There is another person abroad, a less important person—in the eyes of some an insignificant person, whose labours have tended to produce this state of things—the schoolmaster is abroad; and I trust more to the schoolmaster, armed with his primer, than I do to the soldier in full military array, for upholding and extending the liberties of my country."*

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The confidence of Mr. Brougham was soon justified. Canning had destroyed the opinion that had almost grown into a superstition, of the invulnerability of the Tories; and part of the nation had become convinced that they had not an absolute property in the places they had so long held. Many persons thought the foreign policy of the new minister timid and irresolute; nearly all agreed that his plans looked like petty pieces of confusion, when compared with the bold clear outlines traced by Canning. The Whigs were seen mustering their forces to the assault. Ireland, bound by a common hatred of the party of Castlereagh, and giving to the winds every hope she had cherished, swayed upon

* Debates, N. S., vol. xviii., col. 58.

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the verge of rebellion. There the relations of society were gone, property had lost its influence, rank no longer commanded respect, a tremendous organization extended over the whole island; the Catholic gentry, peasantry, and priesthood, were all combined in one vast confederacy, while, in England, O'Connell, as their leader and representative, was thundering at the doors of the house of commons, and struggling, in defiance of law, to force a way into that assembly.

The onset against Toryism was led by Lord John Russell, who, in the commons, gave notice of a motion for the repeal of the Test and Corporation acts. The country, watchful and alarmed, answered the call, and petitions poured in from all parts in favour of the measure. On the 26th of February, a day memorable in the history of the parties, the motion was made. It was not the argument or the eloquence which the occasion called forth, that rendered this debate so remarkable. Upon the subject of the motion little more could be said than we have already recorded. It was that the orators who advocated it appealed with a newly-born confidence to the advancing spirit of public opinion. They did not attempt to wear away prejudice by argument, nor did they attempt to win by conciliation. They spoke with a consciousness of strength; a confidence that they were supported by a power which, like the wind upon the waters was invisible but irresistible. "I have

heard," said Lord John Russell, "that it is the intention of the new ministry to array all the power which influence can muster against this question. I am sorry to learn this; not on account of the question itself, whose progress a minister may retard, but whose ultimate success he never can prevent; but because it is an indication on the part of government of a determination to resist those liberal sentiments which are daily gaining ground in the great mass of society. Kings and parliaments, however they may estimate their power, must more or less submit to be influenced by the spirit of the times in which they live. Even the illustrious person now at the head of his majesty's government must consult that voice—must conform to that standard. No matter how great his achievements or his glory; to the spirit of improvement which has gone abroad he must bow. It is wisdom to do so without reluctance or hesitation—it is wisdom to take his lesson from the signs of the hour." Among those who followed the mover, himself an illustrious scion of one of England's most illustrious houses, were Lord Althorp, Lord Nugent, Lord Milton—names which gave earnest that some of the aristocracy had not been left unvisited by the spirit which was troubling the waters, and connected with speeches which lose nothing when they are read even with that of Brougham.

On the other hand, Sir Robert Inglis, a country

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gentleman, whose character as a consistent, sincere, and immovable Tory, merits our unqualified respect, represented the squirearchy of the country, and stanchly opposed all innovation. Mr. Peel opposed it as the representative of the clergy, and as a minister of the crown. Mr. Huskisson and Lord Palmerston, who had both voted for Catholic emancipation, voted with their colleagues, and attempted to explain away their votes. All the ministerial strength had been gathered for the division, and the whippers in upon the Tory side had been ironically complimented by the Whig speakers upon their activity. When the numbers were declared, there appeared 237 for the motion, and 193 against it, giving a majority to the Whigs of 44.

Whatever may be the differences of opinion as to the general tendency of the Duke of Wellington's principles of government, there can be none as to the manliness and masculine decision of his domestic policy. Defeated by that spirit of improvement whose power he had so much undervalued, he wasted no time and energy in petty skirmishes, but fell back at once to a stronger position; he would have defended even the frontier of Spain had his force been sufficient; as it was not, he fell back at once upon the lines of Torres Vedras. Finding the whole interest of government in vain opposed to the emancipation of the dissenters, he at once determined to

concede the point. Sir Robert Peel said that he should offer no further resistance to the declared wish of the majority, and the bill passed the commons without further serious opposition.

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It was introduced into the house of lords by Lord Holland, in a speech which proved that to him it was a misfortune to have been born to a peerage. The course of the debate immediately discovered the power of the premier. The Archbishop of York rose after the mover, but only to claim, on behalf of the church, some securities in exchange for these acts, and to give his voice for the second reading of the bill. The Earl of Winchilsea impotently gnashed his teeth against it as a bill for rejecting Christianity, and quoted Burke to show that an infidel is "an outlaw of the human race never to be tolerated." The Earl of Eldon as the impersonation of Toryism protested against the repeal. "He had heard much, he said, of the march of mind, and the progress of information, and of persons changing opinions which they had held for years, but he did not think it possible that the march of mind could have been so speedy as to induce some of the changes of opinion which he had witnessed within the last year; least of all did he expect that such a bill as that proposed would ever have been received into their lordship's house even under the idea of making amendments on it. Forty years ago he had voted

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against the repeal of those acts. He has thus voted at a time when a great many noble lords whom he then saw around him were not born, and he might say the same of some of the reverend prelates who now supported the measure before their lordships. He had examined the question deliberately, and the result of his deliberation was that he had been right. He could not, therefore, consent to give up the constitution as well as the church establishment to the extent that the present bill proposed. He could not do this; it must be the work of others. He would solemnly say, as he then did, from his heart and soul, non content to the present bill. The Duke of Wellington, in answer to his old colleague, defended the bill, not by any means as being a desirable measure, but as being a necessary concession. Several orators followed, but there was more of reluctant retreat than of defiance in the tone of the Tories, and the bill was at length read a second time without a division. In the committee there was considerable conflict; the Earl of Eldon grew violent and personally offensive, but fortunately wasted all his waspishness upon the Bishop of Chester. After he had made an attempt to convert the declaration into an oath, an attempt which signally failed; after the Earl of Winchilsea had been equally unsuccessful in an attempt to exclude the Unitarians, by what the Bishop of Chester designated as dogmatizing, and after Lord

Tenterden had moved an amendment which certainly did not bear the impress of his customary good sense, the bill passed.

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Thus was the first outpost of Toryism carried, and the artillery that had been used for its defence was withdrawn to oppose the onset of the Catholics. Catholic Ireland was still united, her population was still perfectly organized and ably commanded, now raging like the surges of their ocean, now silent as the waters of their own dark lakes; in each respect obeying implicitly the voice of the chief upon whom every eye was turned, and to whom every Irish heart was devoted. "I know not how to draw a bill of indictment against a whole people," said Burke, when the Americans were struggling in a bondage which was freedom compared with that the Irish suffered. The Americans were unjustly treated by a distant and a powerful nation; the Irish were ground by the oppression and goaded by the insults of a miserable minority who were present among them to prevent their wrongs from sleeping, and whose cruelty was in proportion to their weakness. The Duke of Wellington appeared to share this ignorance of Burke's better days. Warrior and hero as he was, he appeared stupified with the scene which Ireland now presented. The Brunswick Club had arisen as the antagonist of the Catholic Association, which, by the expiration of its Suppression bill, was

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become again endowed with life. The state of the contest was well described by Mr. Sheil, one of the most eloquent of Irish orators. "The Catholic Association owes its political parentage to heavy wrong operating on deeply sensitive and strongly susceptible feelings. Oppression has engendered it. The Protestant Association has its birth in the hereditary love of power and inveterate habits of domination, and thus two great rivals are brought into political existence and enter the lists against each other. As yet they have not engaged in the great struggle—they have not closed in the combat; but as they advance upon each other and collect their might, it is easy to discern the terrible passions by which they are influenced, and the fell determination with which they rush to the encounter. Meanwhile, the government stand by, and the minister folds his arms as if he were a mere indifferent observer, and the terrific contest only afforded him a spectacle for the amusement of his official leisure. He sits as if two gladiators were crossing their swords for his recreation."

The orator was wrong in supposing that the minister looked on with apathy. Castlereagh would have renewed his Coercion acts, suspended the Habeas Corpus, imprisoned, perhaps hanged, O'Connell, and poured in troops, and he would have had his reward in a bloody and a doubtful contest, and

in a reaction in England which might have shaken even the throne. The Duke of Wellington attempted to moderate the violence of the combatants, and made public an ambiguous promise in case the question were buried for a short time in oblivion. But the Catholics had experience of such promises. Pitt's sense of honour was not less rigid than that of the Duke of Wellington, yet they remembered that the party which had allowed Pitt to promise took from him the power to perform. The agitation continued, and it remained to be seen whether the duke would reconquer Ireland, or would suffer a Whig government to come in and carry an Emancipation bill. The high Tories, and especially the Irish Tories, clamoured for the former course; the Whigs were not without hope that he would adopt the latter.

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Such were the expectations of the parties,* when they assembled to hear the king's speech at the commencement of the session of 1829. With what surprise then did they hear in a speech proceeding from a Wellington cabinet, after an exhortation to put down the Catholic Association, another to review the

* The Tories refused to listen to the sounds which were already in the air. A few days before the meeting of parliament, the Standard, the most able and accredited organ of the Tory party, said, "There is no doubt whatever that a desperate effort will be made by the pro-papery faction on the very first day of the session. This is the key to the multitude of false stories of conversions, and of ministerial emancipation bills."

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laws which imposed civil disabilities upon his majesty's Roman Catholic subjects!

It now at length became indisputable that the duke had deserted his party. Their rage knew no bounds, nor was it unprovoked. The arguments by which the Tories had combated every proposition of Catholic emancipation were not such as could yield to expediency, or could be replied to by a threat of civil war. The arguments by which they justified the exclusion of their fellow-subjects from the rights of citizens, went to prove that the existence of our church, the preservation of our religion, and the integrity of our constitution, were involved in the restrictions the Whigs sought to remove. The sudden abandonment of these arguments, and of the cause they supported, might preserve a ministry, or add fame to a minister, but it could not but inflict a fatal blow upon the party which followed him. What security could the nation have that the party which turned round thus readily at the command of their chief had ever themselves been convinced that the measure they withstood was noxious? How could the people be called upon to put faith in any future assertions, or to believe them in earnest in any future contests? In popularity, the gain was very doubtful, for none would be so blind as not to award the prize of valour to the party who had fought the whole of the fight, and who had only been cheated of the glory of victory. In character, the loss was inevitable

and incalculable, it was a surrender of their principles, an admission that so large a portion of them was unsound, that the people who had once thought them sacred looked on and applauded, while the Whigs demolished the rest.

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It was the Duke of Wellington and Mr. Peel, not the Tory party, who carried this question, and the latter was singled out as the especial object of their vengeance. When the first whisper of his recreancy reached the Tories, their organ exclaimed, "Why has Mr. Peel in every case discouraged every rising Protestant of talent in parliament?—Why have all his official appointments in the church or in civil offices been of pro-papists or of inferior men? We answer both questions at once: Because he is a little man, and he has the miserable jealousy natural to such a consciousness. Had the Duke of Wellington thrown himself upon the country last year, the Protestant cause would have triumphed; but Mr. Peel would have set for ever; a general election would have thrown into parliament 100 abler men than Mr. Peel." To Peel they attributed the desertion of the duke. "He spun his meshes round the Duke of Wellington, threatened him with the Huskisson party, and entangled him inextricably in that dubious and dishonest line of policy from which it is impossible for him to escape."

Again. "Mr. Canning is receiving a posthumous vindication from the lips of those who were his fiercest

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accusers. Not only do they go beyond his mischievous policy in practice, but they renounce those eternal principles upon which these accusations were most hypocritically founded. Mr. Canning knew the men ; he knew them more dishonest than himself, inasmuch as they affected an immunity from ambition to which he never pretended ; they affected an indifference to salary and patronage which, free as he was from such sordid passions, he must still have seen was falsely affected. He knew them more dishonest than himself, and he knew them immeasurably his inferiors in talent, and he scorned them accordingly. The time has arrived which shows who were they ‘ who did that they did in envy of great Cæsar,’ and who acted from ‘ a noble general principle.’ The test has been applied by which we can distinguish the Greys from the Newcastles, the Peels from the Chandoses.”

Such were the sentiments of the Tory party,* as expressed through their favourite organ, and every reader will remember the impatience with which the nightly Standard was waited for in every Tory family,

* Passages still more contemptuous and virulent than those cited in the text might be multiplied ; but these are sufficient to show how little the Tory party had to do with the passing of the Catholic bill. The palpable injustice of

these characters of Mr. Peel contrasted with the overwrought eulogium poured upon him by the same persons before and since, may also teach us the utter worthlessness of such praise or such blame.

and the eagerness with which these spirited articles were devoured. The same sentiments were echoed by Tory speakers at Tory gatherings, and upwards of a hundred petitions nightly were presented to the houses of parliament against the contemplated measure. Oxford was not wanting to the party whose principles she had ever espoused. While Peel was harassed in the commons by the reproaches of the party he had betrayed, and standing at bay against the members who, armed with petitions, were on all sides assailing him, the university of Oxford, which had chosen him instead of Canning, when Canning put off his anti-catholic principles, called upon him to resign his seat. He obeyed; and when he offered himself for re-election, the Tories sought out an opposing candidate, whose success might be an indisputable triumph of sound Tory principles. Their choice was happily made in Sir Robert Inglis; and, against all the influence of the government, all the influence of the talent and character of Mr. Peel, and the unexampled exertions made in his favour, Sir Robert was returned,* Peel abandoning the contest as hopeless on the second day.

* The enthusiasm of the country clergy was, upon this occasion, extraordinary—knots of old men might be seen in the convocation-house, many of whom had not visited Oxford for nearly half a century, and who, at immense per-

sonal sacrifice, had left their curacies and their livings in remote parts of the kingdom, spending no small portion of their slender stipend to come and vote against the man whom they called the arch apostate.

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In parliament the scheme was introduced by a bill for the suppression of political societies in Ireland, which, as the prelude to emancipation, was suffered to pass with little direct opposition. The Catholic Association anticipated its operation by a voluntary dissolution.

On the 6th of March, 1829, Mr. Peel, having been returned for a nomination borough, introduced the question, and, after a speech of four hours' duration, amid cheering so loud as to be heard in Westminster Hall, and the passages leading to the lobby of the house, he moved that the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider of the laws imposing civil disabilities on his majesty's Roman Catholic subjects. Now it was that Mr. Peel declared that ever since the year 1825, when he found himself in a minority upon that question, he had looked upon the success of the measure as ultimately inevitable,* and that he espoused the side of concession, not because he had changed his opinion of its impropriety, but because he feared the more imminent danger of protracted resistance, Mr. Peel represented Toryism not converted to Whiggism, but reluctantly yielding to compulsion.

* Although it has been inferred from this passage of Sir R. Peel's speech, that he advised Lord Liverpool to carry an Emancipation bill, yet such a conclusion is not quite justified by his expressions, which are very guarded. It is to be regretted that his offer to produce the letters that passed was not accepted.

On the first night of the debate, Sir George Murray,* a follower of the Duke of Wellington, by whom he had been brought forward into political life, was the only Tory who supported the minister. Against him appeared many members of that party. That respectable and consistent veteran Tory, Mr. Bankes, the indefatigable Mr. Trant, Mr. O'Neill, and the rod of the apostate Sir Robert Inglis, all came forward to denounce the measure which was indeed now found to be a full and fair concession of civil rights; such as would give the Catholic a voice in the government of the country, and enable him to vindicate his own perfect equality.

Upon the second night, Sir Hussey Vivian and Sir Thomas Lethbridge were the only converts among the speakers. Messrs. Estcourt, Jonathan Peel, Moore—a favourite Tory orator, Hart Davis, and several others who were little known to the house as speakers, but who, as parts of the substratum of Toryism, were valuable specimens of the nature of the mass, spoke against the measure. Upon the division, Sir Charles Wetherell, the attorney-general, and Lord Lowther, the chairman of the commissioners of woods and forests, voted against their

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* This gentleman had kept having absented himself whenever himself hitherto quite unshackled, the question was discussed.

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colleagues. In the same house of commons, which had formerly rejected a similar motion by a majority of 2, it was now carried by a majority of 188.

This majority was decisive, and the Tories at once saw that they had nothing to hope, at least in the commons. Bitterly did they complain of the manner in which they had been taken by surprise, and industriously did they taunt their treacherous leaders with their fear of appealing to the country. But all in vain, "the atrocious bill," "the constitution-breaking bill," was introduced. After two nights of debate, it was read a second time by a majority of 353 against 173. One of the chief features of this debate, apart from the reiteration of the usual topics of argument for and against the question, and the now customary personalities against Mr. Peel and the Duke of Wellington, was a brilliant speech from Mr. Sadler, who had just been returned by the Duke of Newcastle for Newark, and in whom the Tories imagined they had obtained an unapproachable orator ; a delusion which was not dissipated until they heard him sometime after wearying the house with a stammering and unconnected speech, when suddenly called up by a personal allusion. Another was a speech from Sir Charles Wetherell, in which he cast from him the trammels of office,

and attacked his late leaders with all his constitutional vehemence. "So, sir," exclaimed this stanch Tory, "the old Protestant firm—a very valuable firm—the firm of Peel and Co., is dissolved. They are broken up, though they had 200 constant customers, and though the partners are the same in respectability in character and in worth. They are a disbanded firm, but they have not deserted themselves. They have formed a new firm, though with new names at their head."* It was here the

* Sir Charles was especially severe upon Lord Lyndhurst, who had obeyed the command of the duke to his cabinet—"Let us not run a muck against the Catholics for their disregard of oaths, but see what bound some Catholic consciences. When my attention was called to this bill, I felt it my duty to look over both the oath taken by the lord chancellor and that taken by the attorney-general, and it was my judgment, right or wrong, that I was called upon to draw a bill subversive of the Protestant church, which his majesty was bound by his coronation oath to support." Then, after recounting the circumstances of the contest between Sir John Copley and Canning upon this question, he exclaimed, "Am I then

to be twitted, taunted, and attacked, for refusing to do that in the subordinate office of attorney-general, which a more eminent adviser of the crown declared only two years ago that he would not consent to do. Let the attack come—I have no speech to eat up—I have no apostacy to explain—I have no paltry subterfuge to resort to—I have not to say that a thing is black one day and white another—I was not in one year a Protestant master of the rolls, and in the next a Catholic lord chancellor. I would rather remain as I am the humble member for Plympton than be guilty of such apostacy, such contradiction, such unexplainable conversion, such miserable, such contemptible apostacy."

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Tories failed: they had no new names to replace those of the deserters, and while they were astonished and disunited, the battle was won. At the close of the debate, Mr. Peel formally yielded to the Whigs the honour of this victory. "One parting word," he said, "and I have done. I have received in the speech of my noble friend, the member for Donegal, testimonies of approbation which are grateful to my soul; and they have been liberally awarded to me by gentlemen on the other side of the house in a manner which does honour to the forbearance of party among us. They have, however, one and all, awarded to me a credit which I do not deserve for setting this question. The credit belongs to others, and not to me; it belongs to Mr. Fox—to Mr. Grattan—to Mr. Plunket—to the gentlemen opposite, and to an illustrious and right honourable friend of mine who is now no more. By their efforts, *in spite of my opposition*, it has proved victorious."

The bill now got into committee, and every Tory member had his amendment to propose, his additional security to bring forward. Night after night were the most pertinacious endeavours, even to threats of continual adjournments resorted to in order to obtain a little delay. Meanwhile the Tory press was calling the people to the rescue, representing the Duke of Wellington as entertaining a design to usurp the monarchy, having placed the army of England in the

hands of his late second in command, and the army in the colonies in the hands of his late quartermaster general,* and speaking of Mr. Peel as a fit instrument for such a deed. The king, according to the same authority, was oppressed and coerced, and was waiting for his loving subjects to deliver himself from the hands of his ministers.† Even this appeal, which as a factious cry is more ancient than the time when the parliament of Charles I. routed the royal armies, in the name of the king, failed. Even the denunciations of divine wrath poured forth by a Tory clergyman, in the columns of the Standard, were ineffectual. Large majorities continued to reject the amendments, and on the 30th of March, the bill passed the house by 320 votes against 142.

On the 2d of April, the Duke of Wellington moved the second reading in the house of lords. The Archbishop of Canterbury moved the amendment. He was followed by a formidable opposition. The Primate of Ireland, the Archbishop of York, the Bishops of Durham, Salisbury, and London—the last in what his own party sneered at as a trimming speech—were the speakers against the bill from the bishops' bench. Of the lay peers, the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Winchilsea, the Marquis of

* Lord Hill and Sir George Murray.

† See the Standard and Morning Journal of this time.

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Salisbury, the Earl of Harewood, the Earls of Enniskillen, Falmouth, and Mansfield, and Lords Kenyon, Sidmouth, and Tenterden, spoke in opposition. In favour of the bill, the emancipating Tories were the Bishop of Oxford, the Lord Chancellor, Lord Goderich, the Marquis of Anglesey, the new Earl of Liverpool; the majority of whom had voted all their lives on the other side. The Whigs were represented in the debate by the Duke of Sussex, Earl Grey, Lord Holland, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and Lord Plunket (for we must now class that nobleman among the Whigs)—men who will all be known to posterity—men who had spoken and voted all their lives for the question they were now advocating.

The division upon this question is highly disgraceful to the peers. The absolute devotion of the majority of that house to their leaders, their haughtiness to the commons and constant subserviency to the court, has been especially remarkable since Pitt interfered in the composition of that house. They appear to have very early perceived that they could not withstand the current of popular feeling without the aid of the crown. In a house that had so frequently rejected the same measure, and in which not five of the late majority knew that the measure was in contemplation within a week of the commencement of the session,

only 79 peers were present to vindicate their consistency. The numbers, including proxies, were 217 to 112. The usual succession of short sharp battles followed in committee. A final general discharge of oratory occurred upon the third reading; the bill was passed by a majority of 104, and it received the royal assent.

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It was amusing to see in an after part of the session, several of the high Tory party giving vent to their rage against their late leaders by loud harangues against boroughmongers. The Marquis of Blandford,* Mr. O'Neill, and some others, even went so far as to bring forward a motion in favour of parliamentary reform. They were supported by Mr. Hume and Mr. Hobhouse, who never lost an opportunity of voting for any proposition for a reform in parliament, but they were wisely discountenanced by the Whigs, who felt little inclined to leave an important question in such hands, or to base a grand constitutional principle upon party pique.

The Duke of Wellington when he projected the Catholic Emancipation bill, conceived that he was so necessary to his party, that submission on their part

* It is curious to observe the sheep, the gentle manner in which complimentary tone adopted by the bleating runaways were called the ministerial leader of the house back to the fold. of commons to these straying

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must be unconditional and unanimous. He alone could restrain the childish fancies of the king, could scare away the minions who ruled him, could repress within the bounds of moderation the personal antipathies he nourished ; he alone of his party had strength of mind to govern the king, and reputation to content the people. The duke had, however, made the mistake which many great men had made before. He had treated his subordinates with *too much* contempt, and seeing that the majority were swayed by interest, he forgot that some were influenced by principle. Even in the session of 1829 he discovered that the consequence of this error had been to place him in a position of all others the most unpleasant to a man of his high spirit ; that of holding office by the favour of his opponents. The conduct of the Whigs upon this occasion had indeed been an instance of almost romantic generosity. Not only did they take no advantage of the minister's defenceless situation, but they even allowed him to presume on their forbearance ; actually supporting a disfranchisement bill to which they were generally opposed, in order to keep in office an opponent who had stolen their principle. It was doubtless, however, expected that the schism in the Tory party would close when the discussion which had divided it was over ; and although the Duke of

Cumberland, in his speech upon the third reading of the Catholic bill,* had declared, on behalf of his party, that he could never again repose confidence in the duke, yet this and similar demonstrations were looked upon as hasty declarations or vain threats.

The opening of the session of 1830 discovered that the resentment of the Tories was more enduring than the duke had anticipated. In the lords an amendment to the address was moved by the Duke of Cumberland, seconded by the Duke of Richmond, and supported by Newcastle, Stanhope, Winchilsea, King, and Radnor; a list in which the extremes of each party, the highest Toryism and the most ultra Whiggism, mingle.†

* This declaration does not occur in the report of this speech in Hansard's Debates. It is given in a report afterwards published in the Standard, and apparently by authority. The reply of the Duke of Wellington places it beyond doubt that the version of the Standard is the more accurate.

† We must except the Duke of Richmond, who probably supported the amendment simply because he disapproved of the

light manner in which the distress of the country was mentioned. Now that the Catholic question was disposed of, this nobleman was no longer a Tory, nor was he one of those who were driven by disgust into the opposite ranks. A man of liberal mind but of no party, he is one of the very few who have often changed their associates in divisions without tarnishing their character or consistency.

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In the commons the same hostility appeared, and exhibited the ministry in a condition of most pitiable weakness. Sir Edward Knatchbull moved, and the Marquis of Blandford seconded the amendment which asserted an undoubted fact, that the distress which his majesty had been advised was confined to some particular places was general among all the productive interests of the country. This amendment reduced the Whigs to considerable perplexity; to vote against it would be to compromise their principles as a party, and to draw upon themselves the unpopularity of the minister; to support it, would be to turn out a minister from whose weakness they hoped much in favour of their own party principles, and to accomplish the revenge of the Tories. The difficulty was overcome by a finesse: the acknowledged leaders of the Whig party, Mr. Brougham, Lord Althorp, Mr. Spring Rice, and others, spoke and voted for the amendment, all of them, at the same time, expressing their regret, and Mr. Brougham declaring that the vote he was about to give was literally extorted from him. Others, however, appearing to act on this occasion in opposition to their party, but probably really acting in concert, declared their intention of voting for the address, although they did not disguise their preference of the amendment. Thus Alderman

Thompson acted, telling the Tories in opposition, that they were quite as anxious for a change of men as they were for a change of measures. Thus, also, Mr. Whitmore, Lord Howick, Mr. W. Smith, Mr. Mildmay, and many other undoubted Whigs acted; and they were thoroughly justified. The real question at issue, was not whether the distress was partial or general, but whether it was for the national interest to maintain the Duke of Wellington in power. That romantic morality which would give a vote in parliament without any regard to its political consequences, is never advocated but by knaves, or practised but by their dupes. Had the Whigs, upon this occasion, assisted to carry the amendment, they had pursued the shadow of truth, and embraced a falsehood.

By this finesse* the address was carried by a majority of 53.

The position in which the Wellington administration was thus kept existing by the sufferance of the Whigs, was highly favourable to that party's views. Their different objects were now kept before the eyes of the nation; abuses were diligently

* The manœuvre which is sufficiently apparent in the debate, was afterwards acknowledged by the organ of the Whigs.—*Edinburgh Review*, vol. li., p. 574.

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sought out and exposed; Mr. Hume and Sir James Graham, the latter of whom had now risen into high reputation with his party, vied with each other in their eagerness to discover the lurking-places of corruption. The whole party seemed alive to the truth of a remark made by Sir James Graham in his speech on the public salaries debate, that "it is only in moments of distress that useful purposes are effected:" a remark which all experience of party contest verifies, and which no Whig should ever forget. The requisite distress now unfortunately existed. The public attention was fixed upon the subject. In the house of commons, details of corrupt distribution of patronage, of cabinet ministers creating offices and putting their sons into them, then abolishing the offices and retaining the compensation pension,* might have little effect—the members were accustomed to contemplate such things: but they had great effect upon the country. They were treasured up in the hearts of the people to be remembered at the proper season.

The question of parliamentary reform made no

* Sir R. Heron's motion concerning the pensions for the Hon. H. Dundas and the Hon. W. L. Bathurst was carried against ministers by a majority of 18.

advance in this house of commons. The Duke of Wellington made some economical reforms, and Mr. Peel adopted, in some degree, the sentiments of Romilly and Mackintosh, upon the subject of the criminal code ; but parliamentary reform was not to be approached.*

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The Marquis of Blandford, however, again came forward as a reformer. He proposed a standing committee for the disfranchisement of decayed boroughs and the transfer of their franchise ; the abolition of the property qualification, the admission of the clergy to the house of commons, the exclusion of all placemen, the adoption of household suffrage, and the payment of members at the rate of 2*l.* per diem for burgesses, and 4*l.* for knights of a shire.

This notable scheme somewhat perplexed the Whigs ; yet as the marquis appeared perfectly serious, they could not vote against the principle involved in his bill. Lord John Russell and the

* Not a little effect also was produced by a discussion upon the conduct of the Duke of Newcastle in ejecting those of his tenantry who had voted against him in the recent election for Newark. His celebrated justification that he had a right to do what he would with his own, rang through every village. Mr. Peel's open justification of the principle in the house of commons kept up the sensation. Bentham's idea of the ballot was now added to the popular project of a parliamentary reform.

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leaders of the party supported him, but Mr. Stanley, the grandson of the Duke of Dorset, a young orator who had claimed at once a very high position among the Whigs, perhaps more reasonably, voted at once against so absurd a measure.

Lord John Russell's very moderate proposition for extending the franchise to Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, was happily defeated by a majority of 48. Mr. Peel, who upon this occasion first delivered his opinion upon the subject of parliamentary reform, took shelter behind the authority of Burke and Canning, and said, "he saw nothing which led him to think that an alteration in the mode of construction of the house of commons was necessary. Mr. Twiss and Sir George Murray each declared that they were no enemies to legitimate reform; but, although they strenuously opposed the present very inefficient scheme as too violent, they left the house in ignorance of what they conceived to be legitimate reform. Brougham, Dr. Lushington, O'Connell, and Huskisson, enforced the principle of the bill; the last speaker seeming to speak in the spirit of prophecy when he said, the time was fast approaching when ministers would be compelled to come down to the house with some measure or to resign their situations, and that

nothing was more unwise than for a government to delay important propositions till driven forward by overwhelming majorities.

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On the 25th of June, George IV. died.

The conduct of George IV. towards the two national parties was characterized neither by principle nor consistency. His early popularity was based upon a gentlemanly address and an affability which cost him nothing; the extravagances of his youth contributed to it; they were thought to be the weeds of a generous soil. But in the shallow heart of George IV. principle could take no root—self was his motive, his principle, according to the dictates of which he adhered to, or abandoned a party or a mistress. As Prince of Wales he was a Whig, because he wished to annoy his father; as Prince Regent and George IV. he was a Tory, because he wished to remove from him the prayers of his people. Sheridan he abandoned to shame and death, because, having sacrificed fame and friendship to his favour, that great man had no more to offer, and his fickle patron grew weary of him. Earl Grey and the Whigs he drove from his councils because they would make no such sacrifice, and he hated them ever afterwards because he had betrayed them. The Duke of Wellington he clung to in his latter

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inmate of the closet, yet he kept him quite secure
from any intrusion from without.

CHAPTER XXII.

Prospects of the Whigs at the accession of William IV.—French revolution of 1830—Duke of Wellington's declaration against reform—Defeat of his administration—Formation of the Grey administration—Introduction of the first Reform bill—Debates—Rejected on the second reading—Dissolution of parliament—Elections—Meeting of the new house—Reform bill re-introduced—Debated—Passed—In the house of lords—Debated—Rejected—A short prorogation—State of the country—Power of the press—Parliament re-assembles—Second Reform bill brought forward—Passes the house of commons—The Whigs defeated in the house of lords—Resign—State of the country—The Duke of Wellington fails to form an administration—Earl Grey returns to office with power to create peers—The Reform bill passes the lords.

THE death of George IV. occurred at a very critical period. The charm had begun to work,* the steps of the schoolmaster had been faithfully fol-

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* The Tories heard the wind been pushed too far among the approaching. "We cannot help lower classes," groaned a Tory in expressing an apprehension that the Quarterly Review, vol. xxxix., both education and reading have p. 494.

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lowed by the newsboy, who supplied the want as quickly as it was created. Within a very few years the daily journals had sprung from mere chronicles of robberies upon Hounslow-heath, with occasional reports of parliamentary proceedings, and occasional communications from correspondents, to powerful and thoroughly-organized engines for the dissemination of party principles and the universal distribution of political knowledge. In them, that talent which had hitherto bubbled forth in an occasional pamphlet, now flowed in a continued stream of political instruction; in them, the principles and the acts of the parties were daily attacked and defended; not a Tory abuse was brought to light, not one of Mr. Hume's discoveries took place, without being thoroughly paraded and eloquently amplified in the Whig papers. A very few of these instances, acting upon a state of general distress, were sufficient to inoculate even the middle classes with discontent. The Whigs felt that their sails, which had so long been spread in vain to catch the popular breeze, suddenly began to fill, that after seventy years of exclusion and persecution their time, at length, was come. It was not the men of Manchester nor the reformers of Birmingham—it was that voice never heard in vain, the voice of the middle classes which called upon them now, and they prepared to obey.

Even in the debate upon the answer to the message of the new monarch, the Whigs discovered that they were no longer disposed to guard the chariot of the Duke of Wellington. A retainer of the duke, supposing that the Whigs had, by a concession to one of their principles, been bound to an enduring debt of gratitude, expressed surprise that any symptom of opposition should proceed from such a quarter, and began to speak of inconsistency, and the advantage of knowing who were true friends, and who but concealed enemies. He was soon silenced. Earl Grey enabled him to see the difference between giving a disinterested support to a minister while pursuing a just measure and protecting him against its consequences, and continuing to support the same minister when his measures were no longer just. He challenged the ministerialists to produce one instance of his having professed a general confidence in the duke's administration, and repeated the undeniable truth that it was incapable of managing the affairs of the country. The high Tory party had not yet forgotten their cause of quarrel; the Duke of Newcastle and his friends voted with the Whigs. In the lords the duke was sufficiently strong to beat both parties, but the experiment was not tried in the commons.

On the 24th of July parliament was dissolved, and a house of commons which had been in advance of

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the public sentiment upon the subject of toleration, but far behind it upon the subject of parliamentary reform* was sent back to the constituency.

The news of the events of the three days of July, the almost concurrent intelligence that the elder branch of the house of Bourbon had attacked the liberties of France—and had ceased to reign,† came to swell the deep murmur for reform which was now rising from the whole people. As the elections proceeded, the depth of this feeling became manifest. Not a single cabinet minister obtained a seat by any thing approaching to open and popular election. The relations of Mr. Secretary Peel sustained no less than five defeats. The nephew of the Duke of Wellington was at the bottom of the poll, and no

* This is very readily accounted for. By Catholic Emancipation the private interests of the members were not affected; by parliamentary reform they were fearfully threatened. I think it is Hobbes who has observed that the axioms of geometry are only admitted to be true, because there is no class of persons interested in proving them false.

† There is an article in the (Whig) Edinburgh Review, for June, 1830, which foretels, with an accuracy that is astonishing,

the events of the succeeding month. There is another in the (Tory) Quarterly Review, which was pointed out by Dr. Bowring and other speakers, at public meetings, as contributing in some degree to those events. "The nation is nothing," said the latter periodical to the French king, "You are every thing; cut up the press that disturbs you by the very roots; by firmness we have done every thing; follow our example—be you firm also."

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other connexion of the government ventured to show themselves at any place. Of the thirteen great popular constituencies returning twenty-eight members, the minister could claim but three votes. On the other hand, Mr. Hume was spontaneously chosen by the electors of the metropolitan county. Mr. Brougham was claimed by the freeholders of Yorkshire. A Whig colleague was given to Mr. Coke in Norfolk—that venerable Whig, who, in the proud position of the first commoner of England, could afford to smile as Pitt’s merchants and contractors, creations of the national debt, passed him into the house of lords. Devonshire returned two Whigs. Cambridgeshire, in spite of the great influence of the Duke of Rutland, followed of the same track. Wherever popular feeling could have effect upon an election, the result was the same.* The resentment of the high church Tories was now also felt by the minister. Very numerous were the instances in which a Tory constituency rejected their former member for voting for the Catholic bill, and elected a fanatic in his stead. In these exchanges, what the Tories gained in energy, they almost invariably lost in talent. This was especially shown in the election for the Dublin University, where Mr. Croker, a fluent and oftentimes even a brilliant

* See a pamphlet called “What gained by the Dissolution,” generally attributed to Mr. Brougham.

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speaker, who had constantly voted in favour of the Catholics, but who, in all other respects, had deserved well of the Tories, was rejected in favour of a candidate who was certainly his inferior in efficiency.

The new parliament met in November, at a time when the middle classes were discontented, and the labouring classes were desperate; when the despair of the latter was manifested by the most wanton and un-English attacks upon property, and when not a night passed in the agricultural districts in which a spectator could not stand and count several conflagrations of farms or corn-stacks, all lit up by the hands of wilful incendiaries. This class of persons had lost all confidence in the honesty or humanity of their rulers: when they read animadversions upon the corruption and careless extravagance of the house of commons, they contrasted this waste with their own destitution. Toryism had already created a hatred between the property classes and the labouring population in towns; the same dreadful political disorder was now observed in the counties.

On the first night of the session, Lord Grey adverted to the state of the country, and spoke of remedies. "We see the hurricane approaching—we may trace presages of the storm on the verge of the horizon. What course ought we to adopt? We should put our house in order, we should secure our doors against the tempest. How? By securing

ourselves of the affections of our subjects, by removing grievances, by affording redress, by ——— may I venture to use the word?—the adoption of measures of temperate reform. I know not whether we can expect that ministers will undertake such measures, but of this I am satisfied, that if they do not make up their minds to the course indicated, in time, it will be ultimately forced upon them, and reform will be carried under circumstances much less safe and advantageous than now present themselves. I have been a reformer all my life, and I will add, that never—in my younger days, when I might be supposed to have entertained projects wilder or more extensive than maturer years and increased experience would sanction—never would I have pressed reform further than I would do now, were the opportunity afforded.”

In answer to this speech the Duke of Wellington made his memorable declaration against reform. “I am fully convinced,” he said, “that the country possesses, at the present moment, a legislature which answers all the good purposes of legislation; and this to a greater degree than any legislature ever has answered in any country whatever. I am not only not prepared to bring forward any measure of the description alluded to by the noble lord, but I will at once declare, that as far as I am concerned, and as long as I hold any station in the government of the

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country, I shall always feel it my duty to resist such measures when proposed by others.”*

The publication of this answer was the death-blow to the duke's administration. The king was exceedingly popular; his frank and open manners, and his generous oblivion of all the personal quarrels of the Duke of Clarence, contrasted strongly with the conduct of his predecessor; yet such was the unpopularity, or the apprehension of his ministers, that a promised visit to the city was indefinitely postponed, avowedly through fear of popular tumult. It added not a little to the cry against the Duke of Wellington, that he had attempted to involve the king in his own unpopularity—that he had held forth those who disliked his administration as disloyal to their sovereign.

At length the blow which forbearance or policy had so long held suspended, fell. On the 15th of November, on a motion made by Sir Henry Parnell upon the civil list, ministers were left in a minority. Mr. Hobhouse immediately asked whether it was the intention of ministers to resign? and when Mr. Peel remained silent, added that he would bring the question to an issue. The hostility and determination of

* I have given the chief sentences of this celebrated declaration which was considerably amplified by repetition, and perhaps strengthened by reiterated expressions of admiration at the existing system of representation.

the house was manifested by the cries of "Move, move!" by which the member was encouraged to make some decisive motion. No further division, however, took place. Mr. Peel persisted in refusing to notice the unreasonable question put to him; but it was known the next morning that the Wellington cabinet was at an end.

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William IV. immediately sent for Earl Grey, and commissioned him to form a cabinet. The result of the arrangement made by this highly respected nobleman, was the formation of a Whig administration consentient upon the subject of a thorough parliamentary reform. Of this reform administration, Earl Grey was, of course, the premier; the Marquis of Lansdowne was president of the council; Mr. Lambton, whose labours as a reformer in the house of commons had been arrested in 1828, by his elevation to the peerage, as Lord Durham, was lord privy seal; Lord Holland was chancellor of the duchy of Lancaster. The Duke of Richmond, after once or twice looking back, overcame his scruples and amalgamated with the Whigs, accepting office as postmaster-general. Lord Lyndhurst, it was said, reluctantly,* resigned the chancellorship, and, after some

* There was certainly something very suspicious in the manner in which a powerful journal which Lord Lyndhurst was supposed to influence, advocated his retention. Perhaps an indifferent observer, reading the articles which appeared in this paper during the formation

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slight delay, Mr. Brougham succeeded him. This appointment was, no doubt, reluctantly made. It was unfortunate for Mr. Brougham's party, that the only adequate reward of his great ability should deprive them of his presence in the scene where his services were most valuable. Lord Plunket was lord chancellor of Ireland. Lord Melbourne, who was now chiefly known as a man of literary taste and highly-cultivated mind, and as a Whig in politics, but whom posterity will probably remember as a second, but more fortunate, Lord Rockingham, was home secretary. Lord Goderich was secretary for the colonies.

In the commons the leadership was committed to Lord Althorp, whose sterling sense, industry, and straightforward conduct quickly gained him the confidence of the house, and obtained for him a respect and almost affection from the members of that numerous assembly which had been denied to many more brilliant men. Lord Althorp was chancellor of the exchequer. Lord John Russell was paymaster of the forces. Sir James Graham, who had so eminently distinguished himself by his zeal, and ability, was, notwithstanding his extreme Whiggism, raised to the head of the admiralty. Lord Palmerston, who setting out with the advanced guard

of the reform ministry together, hurst was never absent from the would suspect that Lord Lynd- writer's mind.

of the Tories, had sometime since overtaken the Whigs, was foreign secretary. Mr. Stanley, who was one of the very few men in the house of commons who could be pitted against O'Connell with any hope of success, was secretary for Ireland.* Mr. Denman was attorney-general. Mr. C. Grant president of the board of control. Mr. Poulett Thomson, treasurer of the navy.

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Had Huskisson survived, he had, doubtless, joined this administration, which contained nearly all the personal adherents of Canning. The principle adopted by that sagacious leader of yielding to public opinion where he could not guide it, was in fact a Whig principle; and his followers, when public opinion ran strong, found themselves driven to the very position occupied by the Whigs. Mr. Huskisson, however, was now no more; on the 15th of September of this year, he had met a dreadful death. On that day, the ceremony of opening the Liverpool and Manchester Railway took place; Mr. Huskisson was present; he had crossed the railway to shake hands with the Duke of Wellington, and was returning, when seeing an engine rapidly approaching, he

* Mr. Stanley, who sat for Preston, was opposed and beaten when he went down to be re-elected, and his opponent was Mr. Henry Hunt. This gentleman quickly found his level in the house of commons—the firebrand was in another element, it hissed a few moments, and went out.

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stood for a moment irresolute ; before he could get clear of the railway, the engine was upon him, and his thigh was dreadfully shattered : he lingered a few hours and expired. His character as a statesman is very fair. Upon the contested question of the soundness or fallacy of his commercial policy, it is not our province to enter : as a party man he betrayed no friendships, he abandoned no principles ; and those who charge him with too great anxiety to recal his misused offer of resignation sent to the Duke of Wellington, forget to state that that anxiety did not influence his vote, and that there were obvious reasons why he should not wish that a hasty note should be exhibited as a formal letter of resignation.

The Whigs were now again in power, with the national voice in their favour, and with a king who, if he was not himself a Whig, had only relinquished that character as inconsistent with the impartiality of a monarch. They came into office determined to clear away the foul deposits of nearly seventy years of Toryism ; and to turn a stream of popular influence through the government, which should run with sufficient force to prevent any future accumulation. Reforms in every portion of the state were immediately projected ; not a nest of corruption was left unthreatened, although few, except the victims threatened, heeded the threats. Minor abuses and minor reforms excited little attention among a people who

were expecting that great reform which should be the instrument to effect all others.

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An affair of so great magnitude was not easily arranged. The first draft, as it proceeded from those to whom the preparation was committed, contained a provision for the ballot. This was rejected upon discussion, and considerable alteration was made in the qualification for voters. All those parts of the bill which involved a principle appear to have been much agitated; and when we estimate the difficulty of obviating opposite objections from a number of independent men we are not very sanguine as to the perfection of the measure in preparation.

To Lord John Russell, whose persevering efforts in the cause deserved the distinction, was committed the task of introducing into the house of commons the measure which was to restore the Whig constitution. The approach of the bill was preceded by an advance-guard of petitions, which choked even the deep and dark receptacle for such documents under the table of the house of commons, and their discussion employed the attention of the house for many days. On the first of March Lord John Russell entered the house of commons amid the cheers of the majority of the assembly, and the speaker called upon him to move. In the early part of his speech, he stated the position in which the ministry stood, "placed between two hostile parties; neither agreeing with the bigotry of the one, that no

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reform is necessary—nor with the fanaticism of the other, that only some particular kind of reform can, by any means, be satisfactory to the people.” He passed on thence to a recapitulation of the arguments in favour of reform, assuming, at last, that no man of common sense pretended that the assembly in which he stood represented the people of England. The necessity of some community of feeling between the people and the assembly by which they were taxed, and the existing state of the country as the consequence of the absence of such community of feeling, were topics which naturally followed, and introduced the description of the remedy proposed. “Ministers have thought,” proceeded the speaker, “and, in my opinion, justly, that it would not be sufficient to bring forward a measure which should merely lop off some disgusting excrescences, or cure some notorious defects, but would still leave the battle to be fought again with renewed and strengthened discontent. They have thought that no half measures would be sufficient; that no trifling, no paltering with so great a question could give stability to the throne, authority to the parliament, or satisfaction to the country.”

Hitherto the Tories had listened with considerable interest, but with no very violent alarm. They had anticipated some mock measure to hush the reform cry; the gradual disfranchisement of a few convicted boroughs; the gradual enfranchisement of a few large

towns; some denunciations against bribery; and perhaps a proposal for the purchase of Gatton and Old Sarum. The reality fell upon them as a thunder-clap—sixty boroughs struck off by one blow—forty-seven to be reduced to a single member—no compensation proposed to the holders of the illegal property—these propositions spread utter dismay among the members sitting on the opposition benches. Nothing could have been more perfect than the astonishment and confusion of the Tory borough-holders, as, one by one, the names of their boroughs were pronounced, amid the cheers of the Whigs, and as Lord John Russell read in their ears the death-sentence of their political existence.

It is not our province to follow the speaker into the details of this bill. Its principle was the restoration of the democratic influence in the government. It acted by disfranchising decayed boroughs, and enfranchising, although in a very sparing manner, the more recently-risen towns. The duration of parliaments was not altered; not because the ministers disapproved of alteration—for Lord John Russell, in that case, would have assigned no other reason; but because the object could be much more conveniently considered in a separate bill. According to the decision of the committee which framed the bill, the ballot was not adopted in the machinery of elections.—Lord John Russell even stated the arguments against it; but so faintly that he did not appear to feel them.

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No sooner did the Whigs propound this plan in the house of commons than the schism among the Tories at once closed. The high church Tories forgot their wrongs; the political Tories forgot that they had been deserted—both parties joined. Murray and Wetherell were united; Peel and Inglis were no longer enemies; all domestic strife was laid aside, to concentrate their energies against a measure which went to destroy the supremacy of the Tory party. Sir Robert Inglis was the first to attack the measure, which, if the speech as it was spoken bears any relation to that which was afterwards published, he did in a speech discovering very considerable acquaintance with the authorities upon the subject, and what, in a Tory, is more extraordinary, considerable confidence that the cry for reform was perfectly harmless.

Seven nights of debate succeeded the introductory speech of Lord John Russell, and upwards of seventy members spoke upon the question; but this mighty war of words closed without a division. The Tories did not know their strength; they had not formally composed their differences, and united under one leader.

This error was rectified before the second reading, which was moved by Lord John Russell on the 21st. The usual amendment that the bill be read this day six months was intrusted to Sir R. Vyvyan one of the members for Cornwall, who avowed

that he was acting in direct opposition to the wishes of his constituents. "And in this respect," he added, "I believe I am in the situation of very many honourable members who object to the bill; for it cannot be denied that the speech of the noble lord (Lord John Russell) which has circulated in every part of the kingdom has produced a very strong excitement in its favour." Mr. Sheil, one of the offspring of the Catholic Emancipation act, brought his eloquence to aid the party which had enabled him to sit in the house of commons, and was rather more than equal to the baronet to whom he replied. Mr. Charles Grant was less fervent but more argumentative upon the same side. Mr. W. Bankes was indignant on behalf of Dorsetshire. Lord Norreys rather startled the house by saying, that he had come down with the intention of voting for the bill; but he restored the equanimity of his party by adding that he had changed his mind. Mr. Villiers Stuart, a representative of one of the boroughs proposed to be disfranchised, not having been yet able to resign his seat, declared his intention of voting, as a point of honour against the bill; but expressed a hope that he should vote with the minority. The solicitor general, by no means a violent Whig, defended the bill from the imputation of being of a revolutionary character. Sir Edward Sugden, a Tory, whose political importance was entirely derived from his extra-

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ordinary reputation as a profound equity lawyer, declared that the great object of the government in bringing forward this measure was to preserve their offices. He closed the first day's debate. On the second day Lord Mahon, a young nobleman of whom the Tories conceived high expectations, drew a picture of the terrors of democracy, and aspired for one hour of Canning's aid to combat its advance. Sir J. Shelly, an old member of the house, regretted that he differed from his constituents upon this question, and honestly declared, that at a recent reform meeting in his borough, he was the only person present who raised his voice against the measure. Mr. Ormsby Gore invoked the spirits of Sir William Blackstone and Lord Bacon, and quoted and commented upon the remark of the latter—" *Omnia subita immutatio periculosa est.*" Captain Polhill wished that the bill had been more comprehensive. Mr. W. Ward admitted, like many others, that he was opposing his constituents in opposing the bill. Mr. Wyse dismissed the spirit of Sir W. Blackstone, which had been invoked by Mr. Gore as an anti-reformer, and restored him to his rest as a reformer; he adduced the authority of Mr. Locke, also, upon the same side, and then set off upon the track of historical argument in favour of the bill. Sir R. Bateson opposed the measure; because it "would add weight to the aristocracy, while it took away all influence from the mercantile, manufacturing, and ship-

ping interests"—an objection which, although it appeared absurd to his audience, was not without considerable truth. The Earl of Mountcharles expressed his willingness to sacrifice his private interests, since he was conscientiously convinced that the necessities of the public required the surrender. Lord Castlereagh opposed the bill; expressing considerable alarm at the ultimate views of the reformers, and quoting in justification of that alarm a speech made by a gentleman named Emmerson, in which he had declared that the

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—————"Race,
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would be destroyed by the Reform bill for ever. Mr. Shaw, a stout defender of Toryism, expressed himself ready to vote for a moderate plan of reform, but certainly not for this. The attorney-general asked for some clearer view of that indefinite reform which had so suddenly become the object of Tory favour.* Sir

* This speaker, in answer to the imputation upon ministers of being actuated by interested motives, alluded with much effect to the old reformers then in the house—"the friends of reform in the last century and the consistent advocates of the present bill. When he looked around, he saw them filling the same place in the same ranks, and fighting the battle of the constitution. There was his venerable friend the member for Norfolk (Mr. Coke); the noble lord who then, as now, represented the county of Derby (Lord George Cavendish). The honourable and long trusted members for Middlesex (Messrs. Byng and Hume); and Surrey (Messrs. Denison and Briscoe); and Berkshire (Messrs. Charles Dundas

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James Scarlett (the parliamentary lawyers always appear to prefer debating with each other) replied to the attorney-general. He also was favourable to reform, and having once been a Whig, his idea of reform had probably been less shadowy and flitting than that of Mr. Shaw, "but he was bound," he said, "by no vote he had before given, to adopt the specific measure before the house, and deeming it inconsistent with the constitution, he should oppose it." Sir Thomas Dyke Acland remarked that no member had taken part in the debate without expressing his readiness to make some reform; a remarkable change which had taken place since the seven nights' debate. He briefly advocated the second reading. Lord John Russell replied; and after Mr. Hunt had attempted to obtain a hearing, the house divided. The numbers were 302 to 301. The second reading, therefore, was carried by a majority of one.

In ordinary circumstances, after such a division, a ministry must either have retired or dissolved parliament. The reform administration did neither. The country was in such a state that they had a right

and Robert Palmer). Others he minister (Sir F. Burdett), who could name: the noble lord who, then gave his first vote, and made from 1797 to the present time, his first speech in favour of a sat in parliament for Lancashire cause which he had ever since so (Lord Stanley); his honourable honourably and so steadily defended the member for West-

to expect that the Tories would not force them to a dissolution by which they must be annihilated. The Tories, on the other hand, were well aware that if the bill was passed, a dissolution must follow, and to the owners of the condemned boroughs, the passing of the bill was the accomplishment of all they could fear.

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On the 18th of April, upon the motion that the house go into committee on the bill, the Tories made another grand effort. The conduct of this was intrusted to General Gascoyne, who had recovered from the reform fit which succeeded the passing of the Catholic bill, and who moved as an amendment a resolution against the reduction of the number of members of the house. There can be no doubt that this point was well chosen. The original ministerial bill was by far too favourable to the agricultural interests which had a manifest predominance in the representation. But the object of the amendment was avowedly to throw out the ministry. It was seconded in a set speech by Mr. Sadler, who was replied to by Lord Althorp. A debate of two nights succeeded; a debate which called up Mr. Stanley, Sir James Graham, Sir T. Denman, and Lord John Russell, who were supported with great ability by two less known members, Henry Lytton Bulwer and Mr. Hawkins: the former, at that time, better known in literature than in politics, the latter a favourite example with the Tories, who pointed to

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his eloquent speech, and remarked that he sat for the decayed borough of St. Michael. Several of the Whig party, among whom was Sir R. Wilson, whom Mr. Stanley severely castigated for his inconsistency, voted with the Tories, who were supported by their usual speakers, and especially by Sir Robert Peel. Upon the division the ministers were defeated by a majority of 8. The numbers being 299 to 291. Two days afterwards, upon a motion for an adjournment, they were again beaten by a majority of 22. Ministers had now no alternative but to dissolve the parliament.

At this moment all depended upon the king, whose power of dissolving parliament at the proper crisis of public opinion, and of dismissing and appointing ministers, renders him, in ordinary cases, the absolute arbiter as to which party shall rule in England. The present was not, however, an ordinary case: had William IV., at this moment, refused to dissolve, we should have had to tell how the Reform bill was temporarily repressed by a very extensive system of dragooning, and, perhaps, how the Reform bill was lost in a great national convulsion. The Tories appear to have placed their hopes either upon the timidity of William or of his ministers; nothing could exceed the rage with which they learned that the king was on his way to Westminster; nor could any scene enacted at the dissolutions of the exclusion parliaments of Charles II.

have been more riotous than that which was exhibited in each house. It is said by the reporter of the lords' debates, that the peeresses present to witness the ceremony of the prorogation were alarmed ; and that some of the peers were, as it appeared in the confusion, almost scuffling, and as if shaking their hands at each other in anger. The commons were scarcely less disorderly. Sir Robert Peel was pouring forth denunciations against the ministers amid the fiercest cries, which were passing like shouts between the Whig and Tory benches, when the usher of the black rod appeared.

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“The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill,” was now the cry throughout the nation. Never was there in England an enthusiasm so universal among the middle classes as that by which they were now animated. The influence of property was gone ; all ordinary ties were broken ; Tory nomination boroughs threw off their fetters, and elected reformers ; counties which had never before resisted the voice of the landlords now put by their claims, as men would hush a child prattling its nonsense out of season. Sir Edward Knatchbull, whose influence in Kent had hitherto been irresistible, deemed it madness now to attempt a contest. Sir R. Vyvyan was, at once expelled from Cornwall ; Mr. Banks was defeated in Dorsetshire ; no Tory appeared in Yorkshire. The Lowthers, who had held Westmorland, Cumberland, and Carlisle in their hands, obtained only one seat

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for Westmorland. The Duke of Newcastle's influence vanished. Newark, Bassetlaw, and the county of Notts, upon this occasion, returned reformers. Lord Norreys was rejected in Oxfordshire. In every county the feeling was the same. Thousands of voters might have been heard to declare their affection for their landlord, and their sorrow to vote against him; "but they must have parliamentary reform." When this was once carried their landlord should be again their representative.

In the towns the Tories dared not appear; for the populace being equally with the electors enamoured of the Whig measure of reform, having no other means of testifying their zeal, destroyed the houses and attacked the persons of the Tory candidates and voters.

The new house of commons met on the 14th of June. The Reform bill was introduced on the 24th. This was an assembly of men intent upon the accomplishment of the object for which they had been elected; an assembly that would endure no seven nights' debate upon a preliminary motion, which impatiently brooked any discussion at all upon a measure which had been already so tediously debated, and of which the success was now so certain. The bill was introduced, and read a first time without debate. The second reading was moved on the fourth of July. The debate was twice adjourned; at the close of the third night the house divided—367 for, and 231

against ; giving a majority of 136 in favour of the Whigs. Of the minority there were certainly not fifty members who were not directly interested in the fate of the bill.

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From this lengthened debate we miss many names accustomed to stand forth very conspicuously in the list of Tory speakers—the winnowing only remained. Fortunately, Sir Robert Peel and Sir Charles Wetherell sat, each for private boroughs, and the bill had no sooner got into committee than the latter gave proof of his indomitable resolution. Delay was now the only object to be striven for, delay until the popular impatience should beget disorders, or until some happy accident should defeat the bill. A motion was made, which, if carried, would have entitled each borough proposed to be disfranchised to be heard by counsel at the bar of the house. It was of course resisted by a large majority. An attempt was made to get up another debate upon the principle of the measure ; Lord Althorp objected that it had been agreed that one discussion of the principle of the bill on the second reading should be deemed sufficient. Sir Robert Peel agreed that such had been the understanding, declared that he would be no party to any vexatious delay, and left the defence of Toryism to Sir Charles Wetherell. Sir Charles gave immediate proof of the high Tory stubbornness in party warfare. Under his guidance, Mr. Gordon

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moved an adjournment at twelve o'clock, and was of course beaten. Mr. Cresset Pelham immediately made the same motion with the same success. Sir Charles Wetherell succeeded, and a sharp discussion ensued; the Whigs accusing the Tories of having put forward Sir R. Peel as their leader, obtaining a certain delay upon certain conditions, and then, when the delay had been obtained, repudiating Sir Robert's authority, and refusing performance of the conditions. Sir Charles Wetherell, however, refused to listen to any such compromise; another division took place. Lord Brudenell declared he was ready to sit there till five o'clock the next day, and made another motion, which was followed by another debate and another division. Sir Charles Wetherell now took his turn. Ministers, whose supporters were still upwards of two hundred, while those of the minority were less than forty, refused to yield to a factious opposition, which might, if successful, be nightly repeated. Sir Charles taunted ministers with their comic appearance, dancing in and out of the house like a comet with its tail, and declared he should not think of giving up until they had made up a full score of divisions, "I have made up my mind to perseverance, and persevere I will."

The Whigs, however, remained at their post, and at seven o'clock in the morning, Sir Charles, his numbers having dwindled to twenty-four, agreed to a

compromise. The ministers carried their point of moving the bill into committee, and the house adjourned.

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Popular oppositions have moved a series of adjournments, and have attained important advantages by it. This privilege of a minority was at present enforced by twenty-four of the most hated men in the kingdom, and with no other effect than a night of wearisome labour to the majority. The firmness of the Whigs was not without effect; the adjournment experiment had failed, and the Tories had recourse to the more usual weapons of opposition. Heavy and laborious was the task of pushing the bill through committee, where every clause was to be won by a debate and a division.* Three nights of debate upon the question, that the bill do pass, closed the scene. On the 21st of September the bill was carried by a majority of 109.

And now came the ordeal of the house of lords.

* Upon one important question the ministers were defeated in committee by a majority of 84. The Marquis of Chandos proposed to give the right of voting for counties to tenants at will holding at a rent of 50*l*. Lord Althorp saw the object of the amendment, and pointed out that these tenants were entirely dependant upon their landlords, and that the consequence of the adoption of the amendment would be a very general and early agitation for the ballot. Mr. Hume, however, and his party of ultra Whigs, upon this occasion, joined the Tories; probably because they thought that the consequence which Lord Althorp deprecated would be highly beneficial.

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Expectation had long been anxiously seeking some symptom by which the intentions of this assembly might be divined: ‘What will the lords do?’ inquired the author* of a powerful pamphlet. Mr. Macauley pointed to the long line of deserted halls and desolate mansions in a well-known quarter of a neighbouring metropolis as enduring lessons what they should not do. “From those mansions and castles of the aristocracy of France, as proud and as powerful a body of nobles as ever existed were driven forth to exile and to beggary, to implore the charity of hostile religions and of hostile nations. And why did such destruction fall upon them? Why was their heritage given to strangers, and their palaces dismantled, but because *they had no sympathy with the people?*” While the intention of the Tory peers was yet unknown, the multitude looked on with a surly impatience; watching the debates in vain; and waiting to know whether they were to laugh at their cowardice, or to roar them into submission.

On the 22d of September Lord John Russell, attended by upwards of one hundred Reformers of the house of commons, carried the bill up to the lords, and it was read a first time, upon the motion of Earl Grey, without any debate.

On the 3d of October the same nobleman moved

* Supposed to be Lord Brougham.

the second reading. It must have been with strange and mingled feelings that Earl Grey rose to speak that night; the object of his early partiality which he had nursed and reared through nearly half a century, when nearly all others laughed at it as a delusion, had at length become the object of universal enthusiasm; but the exultation this thought might prompt would fade again as the occasion called up the images of his departed friends; for what generous man could contemplate present success without thinking of those who had striven with him to obtain it, or could feel a confidence that the long watched for hour of victory was come without a pang, that those who had joined him in his watches could no longer share in his success?

Earl Grey could well affirm, after glancing at the most prominent facts of his public life, "I stand before your lordships the advocate of principles from which I have never swerved. It is not, however, enough," he continued, "for a public man pretending any claim to the character of a statesman, to show that he is sincere and consistent in his actions; it is not enough for him to show that what he has proposed has been in conformity with opinions long established in his mind; he is bound to entertain the conviction, forced upon him through all the chances and changes of a long political career, that in proposing a measure affecting the mighty interests of the

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state, the course he takes is called for by justice and necessity. He has a further duty to perform; he has to prove that he has not forced into notice even right opinions, rashly, precipitately, or at a dangerous season; but that he has done so from the sincere conviction that the measures which he proposes are essential to the well-being of the country; that they can no longer be delayed with safety; and that when passed into a law they will bind together and unite in affection to the government a loyal and confiding people."

In the pursuit of these objects the earl branched forth into all those topics which the fate of the Wellington administration and the present state of the country so numerous presented; proving the necessity of reform, and of a bold and decisive measure of reform. The justice of the measure was now a worn out topic, which the Tories had long since refused to argue. Thence the earl passed to a minute explanation of his measure, disapproving in a marked manner, as he passed along, of the Chandos clause, giving votes to tenants at will. "It is one which I should certainly not have myself proposed, and the government are not answerable for it. I hope it will be found to act well; but even then it is liable to this objection, namely, if the same influence be exercised over tenants in counties that has been exercised in other places, it will be likely to generate

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a very strong feeling in favour of a regulation to which I am myself opposed, and in favour of which, as I believe, there is not a word in the petitions recently presented to this house—I mean the adoption of the vote by ballot.” He concluded by a fervent appeal, first to the house generally, and then particularly to the bench of bishops, entreating them not to reject a measure of justice and conciliation, and warning them to be wise in time.

The debate which succeeded is one of very extraordinary interest ; discovering a mass of talent which might vie very successfully with any of those in the house of commons upon the same subject. Lord Wharncliffe attempted to answer Earl Grey, and moved that the bill be rejected—an unusual motion which from the tendency of other speeches upon the same side appeared to have been deliberately resolved upon, in order to mark their lordships’ detestation of the bill. Earl Mulgrave, whose name will in future times be associated with the dawn of good government in Ireland, followed upon the Whig side. Earl Mansfield brought considerable talent and research to recommend the Tory amendment. To him succeeded Lord King, whose caustic speeches and ultra-Whig sentiments had long rendered him an object of especial terror to the bench of bishops. The Marquis of Bute followed. At the close of his speech an adjournment was moved, and it was

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now evident that the debate would extend through several nights.

The Earl of Winchilsea commenced the second day's discussion. The Earl of Harrowby, an aged Tory nobleman, followed him, and surprised the house by a speech of great power and extraordinary eloquence ; a speech which was highly complimented by all parties, and which formed the general object of attack and eulogium. These Tory speeches were ably answered by Lord Melbourne, who skilfully adapted his arguments for parliamentary reform to the topics before urged by the Duke of Wellington in favour of Catholic emancipation. This called up the Duke of Wellington, who, after defending his own consistency, made an attack upon that of Earl Grey, picking out a passage from one of the earl's speeches in favour of Catholic emancipation, after a bill to that effect had passed the commons, and arguing from it that the earl was, at that time, well satisfied with the constitution of that house. The Earl of Dudley made an elegant speech against the Whig ministers, applying himself to every point in which he thought them vulnerable, and asking whether such men were to be allowed to pull to pieces our constitution. This attack was eloquently retorted by the Marquis of Lansdowne, who spoke of Lord Dudley's speech as bearing little upon the present question, and as composed for a different occa-

sion, remarking that it was an excellent example of a good speech kept too long. Lord Londonderry denounced the measure before the house, and was answered by Lord Goderich, who was succeeded by the Earl of Haddington upon the Tory side. Lord Radnor, a nobleman professing extreme Whig principles, and who can boast the distinguished honour of having been declared by Mr. Canning and Mr. Windham to have delivered the best speech they had ever heard, advocated the bill. Lord Falmouth, the Earl of Roseberry, and the Earl of Carnarvon, the first and last Tories, the second a Whig, followed, and the fourth day's debate was closed by a powerful speech from Lord Plunket.

Lord Wynford, who, as Chief Justice Best, had been one of the oracles of the law, and was now become one of the magnates of Toryism, opened the fifth night's debate ; being allowed, on account of his infirmities, and, upon the motion of the Duke of Cumberland, to deliver his sentiments from his seat. Lord Eldon attempted to follow ; but was unable to render himself audible across the house. The tedium was relieved by Lord Chancellor Brougham, who, rising from the woolsack, delivered the most masterly speech which even he had ever uttered. Taking a review of the debate, he called up each Tory speaker who had preceded him, but only to destroy him by some burning sarcasm, or to display upon him his

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exquisite skill in tormenting. Lord Dudley, the inconsistent Lord Winchilsea—who, angry at the authors of the Catholic bill, had promised, at a public meeting, to be present in the house of lords to support the Reform bill—Lords Mansfield, Wharncliffe, and even Harrowby, successively passed the ordeal, and the speaker proceeded until the assembled peers trembled at the terrible powers of the spirit that had been placed among them. Lord Lyndhurst came to the rescue, and his speech, as every speech of his must be, was one of great ability; but it fell tamely on the ear amid the almost tragic interest which had been excited by his predecessor. The night was now wearing, and the house grew impatient. Lord Holland did not attempt to speak to the question; Lord Tenterden shortly opposed the bill; the Archbishop of Canterbury pledged his bench against it; the Duke of Sussex insisted upon being heard, and in a manly speech supported his principles as a Whig. The Duke of Gloucester opposed the bill as too violent; Earl Grey replied, unnecessarily vindicating himself from certain aspersions thrown upon his early political conduct. The house divided.* The bill was thrown out by a majority of 41. The numbers were 199 to 158.

The house of commons immediately passed a vote

* The motion that the bill be rejected had been withdrawn, and the ordinary amendment that the bill be read this day six months, substituted.

of confidence in ministers. The king interposed a short prorogation, expressly for the purpose that the bill might be again introduced. The speech was couched in terms which plainly indicated that the sovereign continued faithful. Every method was adopted which could palliate the news of the rejection of the bill, and avert the thunderstorm which threatened. The Whigs were, in a great measure, successful ; the lightning did not strike the lofty towers of our monarchy, nor strip off the Gothic fretwork of our house of peers ; but strange sights were seen throughout the nation ; and a voice was gone forth which told that the end was not yet. In London tens of thousands of men marching in close array, and crowding all the avenues to the palace ; the houses of the Tory peers in a constant state of siege ; the peers themselves venturing abroad at the danger of their life : in the metropolis of a generous people, the Duke of Wellington, whose reputation is his country's glory, unable to appear without insult and danger ; in the metropolis of a people remarkable for their respect to the laws, Lord Londonderry struck senseless from his horse by a flight of stones : in the country, Nottingham Castle, the ancient possession of the Duke of Newcastle, given to the flames ; Derby in the power of a mob, the gaol destroyed, the houses of known Tories demolished ; the city of Bristol on fire, and Sir Charles Wetherell fleeing in disguise by the

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light of the conflagration—men of all grades banded together in unions, pledged, at any cost, to obtain parliamentary reform ; a hundred and fifty thousand men assembled at Birmingham, and threatening to march upon London ;—these were the signs of the times, varied by public meetings all over the country, comprehending nearly the whole mass of the middle classes, and a large portion of the aristocracy, who joined in the expression of indignant surprise, that a “whisper of a faction” should be allowed to render abortive the expressed desire of a nation. Well was the national sentiment expressed and sustained by the press. Morning and evening did these batteries of reform pour forth their incessant fire, and the noise reverberated through the kingdom. A very large majority of the journals were in the interest of the Whigs and the people, but the combined power of all the rest of these shrinks into insignificance when compared with that of the leader of them, a paper which, in the pride of conscious power, had styled itself the leading journal of Europe. Never was there so tremendous a party engine as the “Times,” at the period of which we are now treating, presents. The receptacle of talent sufficient to form three brilliant reputations, backed by the admiration, the applause, the obedience of a nation, it is impossible to look back upon its career without strong excitement ; to see it guiding, counselling, exhorting, exciting, moving onwards, exult-

ing in its own might; crushing at a blow the incipient reputation of any Tory in whom it discerned talent that might render him formidable, yet stooping to cherish and to draw forth into blossom the smallest bud that might be discovered among its own party. Its advocacy of the party it espoused was not confined to forcible leading articles and to able argument; in all those numberless arts by which a party may be strengthened or injured this journal was perfect. The principal conductor of that paper appeared placed, like the listener in the Ear of Dionysius, in a focus of sound, whither the most secret whisper and the loudest clamour were alike wafted.* Yet, great as was the influence of the “Times,” it only blew the flame, it did not ignite it. The “Times” was supporting the Duke of Wellington’s administration, and repeating his declaration against reform, without disapproval, when it caught the mur-

* It is as absurd to charge a newspaper with inconsistency as it would be to rail against a captured piece of ordnance for throwing its shot among its former masters. A newspaper is a mercantile adventure, in which a large capital is embarked, and by which large profits are made; and the part it takes upon any question must, of course, depend upon the will of the majority of the proprietors. The

desertion of an influential newspaper is a circumstance rather to be charged as an evidence of incompetency in the party it deserts; since, in ordinary cases, it shows that Whig shareholders have been obliged to sell their shares to Tories, or *vice versâ*. Never was a greater political blunder made, than by those Whigs who resolved “to make war on the Times.”

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mur of the coming storm, and, with infinite tact, prepared to ride it.

The parliament was re-assembled on the 6th of December, while the excitement was still strong and unrelaxing. Lord John Russell immediately introduced a new bill of parliamentary reform, not less efficient than the one of last session, but embodying all those improvements which the abundant discussion of the question had suggested. The tone of the opposition was now considerably moderated, and although Sir Charles Wetherell and Sir Robert Inglis indignantly denied the charge of meeting the present bill with only a modified opposition, yet it was sufficiently manifest that the spirit of the Tories was cowed, when they let the bill be introduced and read a first time without debate or division. On the 16th the second reading was moved. The principal features of this debate were a speech from Mr. Macauley—a speech from him must be a prominent feature in any debate—and a piece of clever but somewhat rambling declaration from Mr. Croker, which was demolished with considerable promptitude by Mr. Stanley, who mercilessly held up to view his victim's historical blunders. In praising the new bill above the last, Mr. Stanley addressed it as “*Matre pulchrâ filia pulchrior.*”

——— “Mox datura
Progeniem vitiosiore,”

happily retorted Sir Robert Peel. The second reading was carried by a majority of 162. In twenty-two evenings of debate, the details of the bill were discussed, and almost every clause disputed. The hatred of the Tories yet inspired them with sufficient strength to sustain three nights of debate upon the third reading, at the close of which they were finally defeated by a majority of 110. On the 23d of March the Reform bill passed the house of commons.

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Again the hated measure was brought before the peers, and symptoms of division and dismay appeared among the Tories. Lord Harrowby, the valiant destroyer of the former bill, was now weak enough to speak of some concession to public opinion. Several Tories followed him, and although the Duke of Wellington reiterated his opinion against all reform, yet the resolution of his party was evidently shaken. On the 9th of April the second reading was moved, and on the 13th it was carried by a majority of 9; the numbers being 184 to 175. The Duke of Wellington inserted in the journals a strong and uncompromising protest.

It was very evident that this majority was only illusory, and would dwindle to minority in committee. The cry now was, "Create peers:" "create," shouted the Times, "create," shouted the orators at public meetings. Lord Grey was not yet satisfied

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of the necessity. The bill passed into committee, and the scheme of Tory operations immediately became manifest. Lord Lyndhurst now took upon himself the protection of the bill, and prepared to mould it into a specimen of Tory reform. His first step was to propose the postponement of the consideration of the disfranchising clauses ; this the Whigs, of course, opposed, and they were beaten by a majority of 38.

The time was now arrived, in the judgment of the Whig ministers, when the extreme remedy, provided by the constitution against the stoppage of the state machine through the opposition of a factious majority in the house of lords, should be applied. Earl Grey and Lord Brougham waited upon the king, and demanded authority to create a sufficient number of peers to render the sentiment of that house consonant with those of the sovereign, the government, and the people. This demand proceeded from a minister whose decisive policy was matured by deliberation and supported by wisdom. It is not to be expected that an inferior intellect should at once partake of his firmness, nor can we blame the king, when looking rather on the violence of the remedy than on the danger of the disease, he refused his consent. The Whigs, of course, immediately resigned.

The announcement of this event was answered by

a storm of petitions calling upon the house of commons to stop the supplies until the Whigs were restored to office and the Reform bill was passed ; by a prompt address, and numerous notices of motion in that house ; by simultaneous public meetings, at which resolutions were taken to pay no taxes ; by a run upon the bank for gold ; and by the general adoption of every expedient which could render the prosecution of the present unreformed system of government impracticable. Considerable discussion followed in the house of lords, in the course of which Earl Grey stated and defended the ground of his resignation. “ If a majority,” he said, “ of this house should have the power of acting adversely to the crown and the commons, and was determined to exercise that power without being liable to check or control, the constitution is completely altered, and the government of the country is not a limited monarchy ; it is no longer, my lords, the crown, lords, and commons, but a house of lords, a separate oligarchy governing absolutely the others.” He pledged himself that unless he could be assured of the ability of carrying the bill fully and efficiently through that house, he would not again return to office.

Meanwhile the king sent for Lord Lyndhurst, and through him conveyed to the Duke of Wellington, a strong wish that he should form an administration able to carry some plan of extensive reform. The

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ink of the strong anti-reform protest which the duke had recorded against the second reading of the bill was scarcely dry upon the journals of the house, yet the duke, whose loyalty appears to be of an oriental character, at once consented, declaring afterwards that he could not have shown his face in the streets for shame, if he had refused to assist the king in his distress. Sir Robert Peel, however, read the crisis more wisely, and saw the impossibility of the undertaking. Without his assistance, the duke could not prevail upon one man to sit with him in the cabinet—the attempt was abandoned; and Lord Grey, receiving the power he had demanded, returned to office.

No sooner was it known that the earl was armed with the terrible power of creating peers, than the watch-dogs of Toryism, lately so loud and furious, crouched in sulky submission at his feet. Loudly did the Earl of Harewood lament that the reception of such a measure was necessary to prevent an infusion of a large body of new peers. Deeply did the Duke of Newcastle and Lords Winchilsea and Carnarvon bewail that they were no longer members of an independent body. The Duke of Newcastle retired from the house; Lord Londonderry said, that if the minister would distinctly state that he had authority to create peers, he would withdraw his opposition. Lords Kenyon,

Winchilsea and others continued their nightly hostility ;—they were tantalized by the possession of a power to crush the bill which they dared not use. In their opposition to the enfranchisement of the Tower Hamlets, an opposition which drew forth an elaborate and eloquent speech from Lord Durham, they were left in the minority 55 ; and upon another occasion in a minority of 61. The mass of the Tories dared not vote ; but they vented their rage in angry personalities against Earl Grey. Seven days of harmless snarling in committee,—a dying growl at the third reading—and the supremacy of Toryism passed away. On the 4th of June the Reform bill passed the house of lords. The friends and disciples of Earl Grey—the link in the chain of Whiggism which connects Chatham with the present generation—crowding around him, congratulated him upon having achieved the great object of a long life.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

Thus, after seventy years of deprivation, did the Whigs recover for the people their constitutional influence in the state.

At the close of a period of forty-five years of Whig government, we took a review of the fortunes and condition of England while under the guidance of that faction. We saw that she had been surrendered into their hands disgraced by a dishonourable peace, threatened by civil war, and divided by the animosities engendered by a disputed succession ; we saw her return flushed with conquest, elate with victory, with unspent energies and unwearied strength, rich in acquired possessions, and secure in the respect of the whole world. Thus did Lord Oxford surrender England into the hands of Lord Townshend ; thus did Lord Chatham resign her to Lord Bute. The

period which has passed under our review since then has presented many scenes of defeat and many of triumph. The American war was one of the genuine offspring of Toryism; the Pitt and Burke crusade was another. The unpopularity which, during the former half of the reign of George III., rendered it unsafe for him to appear in public, was the natural production of the same soil; the church and king acclamations of a later period were bought with a thousand millions of money. Toryism cannot be practised abroad without being proceeded in at home. Without the mine of bribery which Pitt discovered and exhausted, discontents must arise, and must be punished. While the constitution remains entire, this is not readily effected; one by one, therefore, the safeguards of personal liberty are withdrawn, the power of secret imprisonment is grasped at and obtained, the house of commons is carefully managed, and Toryism being secure can afford to be generous. Such at least were the gradations by which Toryism advanced during the reign of George III., and such also were its gradations under Charles II., who, however, failed in the important point in which his successor of the house of Hanover was so signally successful, the management of the commons. Charles was obliged to rely much upon plots, and to introduce them upon a grand scale; Pitt, to whom fortune had given much greater resources in this department, only produced them incidentally.

Toryism certainly never had so fine an opportunity of justifying her principles by results, as when while she struck with one hand she could scatter gold with the other ; yet, even under these favouring circumstances, she failed. Let the state of Birmingham and Manchester, and the carnage at the latter place, exemplify the state of England under Castlereagh, and the manner in which it was attempted to be concealed ; let the utter disorganization of society in Ireland tell the result of Toryism there ; let the murderous designs of Thistlewood and his companions mark how deep and bitter was the hatred of their Tory rulers which had at that time penetrated the hearts of the English people ; let the great and final burst of national energy which threw off the Tory nightmare and won the Reform bill, show the unanimity of the verdict by which Toryism was at length condemned.

When the Whigs came into power, in 1714, they found the nation encumbered with an annual charge of 3,351,358*l.* interest upon the national debt. Forty-eight years after, when the Tories succeeded, in 1762, and had concluded by the peace of Utrecht the glorious war by which the Whigs had broken in pieces the empire of Louis the Fourteenth, they found the annual interest to be 4,840,821*l.* In 1830, sixty-eight years later, when the Whigs returned, finding in their turn that the country had just concluded a successful war, the annual interest was 29,118,858*l.*

The Reform bill was not a measure conceived in the spirit of party. The object of its framers was purely and solely that which they held out to the world—the infusion of such a portion of popular influence into the legislature as should prevent the recurrence of enormous instances of misgovernment. Had the object of the Whigs, who framed this measure, been the permanent assurance of office to their own party, they must have been the most shortsighted of mankind. They threw a great proportion of the representation which they took from the corrupt boroughs into the hands of the county freeholders—hereditary Tories; they allowed this constituency to be increased by the addition of tenants at will, whose votes are, of course, in times of tranquillity the property of the owner of the farm; and they strenuously opposed the only means which could give their party a chance of success in the counties—the ballot. The Whigs, when they framed these clauses, must have perceived their effect; that they would give to the middle classes in the counties a mighty power, but a power which could never be exercised without a sacrifice; that they would form a constituency which would return a majority of Whigs in every moment of strong excitement, but would invariably replace them by Tories when the Whigs had corrected the misgovernment and the excitement had ceased; a constituency which a continual trade-wind of private interest wafted towards Toryism, and which only an occa-

sional storm of public enthusiasm could impel towards Whiggism.

Such *must* be the condition of a constituency which is left under the influence of the larger landholders. Our law of primogeniture compels this class of men to nurture abuses in the state, and he who would profit by state abuses will not wisely become a Whig.

The ten-pound householders of the boroughs form a constituency more favourable to Whiggism : but the majority of our populous towns have always returned Whigs. In an election, taking place in a time of tranquillity, the Whigs will gain but little by the Reform bill, even in the borough representation ; the rate-paying clauses, and the cumbrous machinery of the registration, offer endless opportunity for management to a party in possession of union, perseverance, and money ; and there is still a sufficient number of small constituencies left to aid the Tory majority in the counties.

If the Whigs, therefore, looked a step beyond principle while framing the Reform bill, or regarded it as an instrument of future supremacy, they could not have relied upon the actual operation of the bill. They must have relied either on popular gratitude—a sentiment which is, doubtless, generous and warm, but which no sane man would reckon upon as lasting—or upon the necessity of preserving their party in power, in order that they might protect their own

work. That necessity is not unreal; the extremely artificial construction of this system of representation renders it quite unable to protect itself; and its popular character might be effectually destroyed by means which would, with proper management, probably escape observation, and be felt only in their effect. It is not unreal also, because the Tories could not retain power for any considerable time without making an effort of this description. The landholders, since the cessation of war expenditure reduced their rents, and the alteration in the currency nearly doubled their mortgages, are one of the most necessitous classes of our community, and would quickly desert any leader who denied them the necessary and customary privilege of providing for their younger children without increasing the burdens of their own estates. This, however, must be denied, or but very partially granted, so long as popular influence predominates in the commons, or in other words, so long as the Reform bill continues in effective operation. The Whigs, therefore, to whom long exclusion from office renders even the legitimate emoluments of government an unexpected advantage, are probably the only party which could carry on the government for any considerable time, while the Reform bill retained its spirit; but the Tories could govern very well under its forms.

This reason for keeping the Whigs in power is not,

however, very likely to be acted upon or discerned by a multitude ; nor can any other be assigned connected with the Reform bill, which can suggest that the framers of this bill contemplated it as an instrument for creating a supremacy to the Whigs. Had it borne more marks of party spirit it would probably have been more effective and more enduring.

The difference between the policy of Earl Grey and that of the Earl of Bute exhibits the latter to some advantage, as a party leader. Bute, when, after a long exclusion, he placed his own party again in power, cleared every public office of his opponents ; and failing in Englishmen to replace them, imported an army of adventurers from Scotland ; yet, notwithstanding his decision and the steady patronage of the king, so great was the power of a party long in possession of office, that it was not without numerous short Whig irruptions that the Tories succeeded in rooting up the foundations of their opponents' influence. Grey, on the contrary, attempted to conciliate the enemies he had conquered ; and hoped to gratify, by a division of legitimate patronage, a party whom their own chiefs could not content with less than a monopoly of abuses. The resources of that faction might well have terrified Earl Grey from driving them to extremity, could he have entertained any rational hope of gaining their friendship. They had with them the house of lords, a very powerful auxiliary in a struggle where all other advantages were nearly equal, but one

which should never be placed in the van when the tide of popular influence runs strong. The power of the lords is based upon prerogative, and prerogative in England was never stretched without snapping.

The Tories had with them also, nearly all that very numerous class who counted upon emolument from government favour. These looked upon the Tories as the habitual occupants of office—upon the Whigs as only occasional intruders. In their time and that of their fathers it had been so. Little tradition remained among them of the long period of national prosperity and Tory opposition during the reigns of the two first Georges.

The Tories still retained the great body of the clergy; an incalculable advantage, since it secured to them, in almost every parish, an agent possessed of zeal, influence, and leisure.

They still possessed, also, all the local patronage throughout the country. Tory lord-lieutenants still appointed Tory magistrates, and Tory magistrates still directed the most humble rivulets of patronage in the same direction.

They possessed great wealth to expend in party purposes, for the party was composed of men of great wealth, although often of still greater necessities. Money so laid out was looked upon as a profitable investment, and was always abundant.

They were a party, also, united under one name. Had the Duke of Cumberland, with Newcastle,

Kenyon, Winchilsea, Roden, and other noblemen, continued separated from the Duke of Wellington, and called themselves Absolutists, or by any other bold and undisguised title, it would have been at once seen that their principles were dangerous to property ; and any Tory administration would have been injured by their support. These, however, submitted to have their differences forgotten under the general name of Tories ; while the Radicals, refusing to call themselves Whigs, became unpopular allies, terrible to all timid Whigs, and a fine topic of declamation to the Tories.

At the passing of the Reform bill, therefore, the Whigs appeared to have but a slender tenure of office. Nothing but the undeviating support of a patriotic monarch, and a government of great wisdom and vigour appeared capable of continuing their power. With these advantages that power might possibly become consolidated ; and England might enjoy, for some time a mild and an economical government. But the source of Toryism is in human nature, and can never fail ; nor can I doubt that future writers will have to record future losses of popular influence, and future struggles for its recovery.

THE END.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE.

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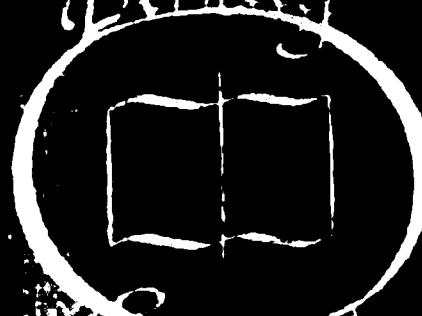
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